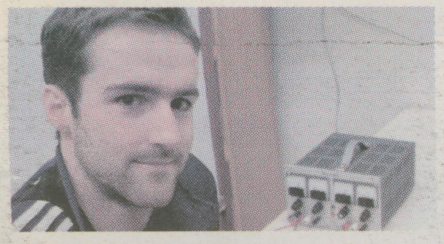

Student designs high-tech, 'brain-like' gadget
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Cracking walnuts with the Jaws of Life for 58 years.

MARTLET

Thursday, March 30, 2006 | The University of Victoria's Independent Newspaper | www.martlet.ca | Volume 58, Issue 27

Firefighters and researchers examine effects of stress

Page 3

AARON MCMILLAN PHOTO

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Firefighters heat up under pressure

by Micah Luxen

When firefighters rescue a victim from a motor vehicle accident, the level of stress they sustain is as much of a risk to their health as the burning vehicle around which they're working.

According to Dr. Lynneth Wolski of UVic's school of physical education, previous research and occupational hazards data indicates that over 50 per cent of firefighter deaths are due to heart attacks or strokes. The same research found that and 85 to 90 per cent of those deaths can be attributed to the stress on the cardiovascular system that results from heat stress and the physical demands of the job.

To find out just how much stress firefighters endure when facing an emergency situation, Wolski is leading a team of UVic researchers in a project to take a more accurate look inside the firefighter's body. On March 23, Wolski asked six Victoria firefighters to swallow a small pill containing a radio transmitter that can monitor the physical reactions they have under stress.

"What this information will do is allow us to make recommendations about job and work cycling for the firefighters during an incident," said Wolski, adding that the transmitters may provide the evidence fire departments need to hire more human resources for crisis response. "It will also allow us to make recommendations about rest and recovery times after emergencies," she said, such as how long a firefighter should wait before heading back into action.

When firefighters are battling a fire, they are monitored by paramedics who ensure they are not dehydrated or overheated. Firefighters' core temperatures are normally taken by ear.

But firefighter Graeme Humber, a volunteer for Wolski's study, said the information researchers are acquiring from the pills could lead to big improvements in the safety of the firefighting industry.

"What they've discovered with this pill and the other monitoring systems is that after we're been inside a burning building, our core body temperature can be anywhere from two to three degrees higher than what that internal temperature in our ear is telling [paramedics], and those two degrees can be the difference between life and death," he said.

The "other monitoring systems" include rectal probes and esophageal sensors, which have been the most common ways to take firefighters' core temperatures.

An expert in occupational physiology, Wolski has also worked with wilderness firefighters, conservation officers, mill workers, paper workers and loggers.

"I am hoping the results of the research study help to improve the human safety factor," she said. "That is, ensuring that fire departments have information and guidelines that help them to keep their firefighters operating at physiologically safe levels, where their vital signs do not indicate thermal or cardiovascular overload. This will allow the firefighters to be able to make good decisions and to work effectively and efficiently."

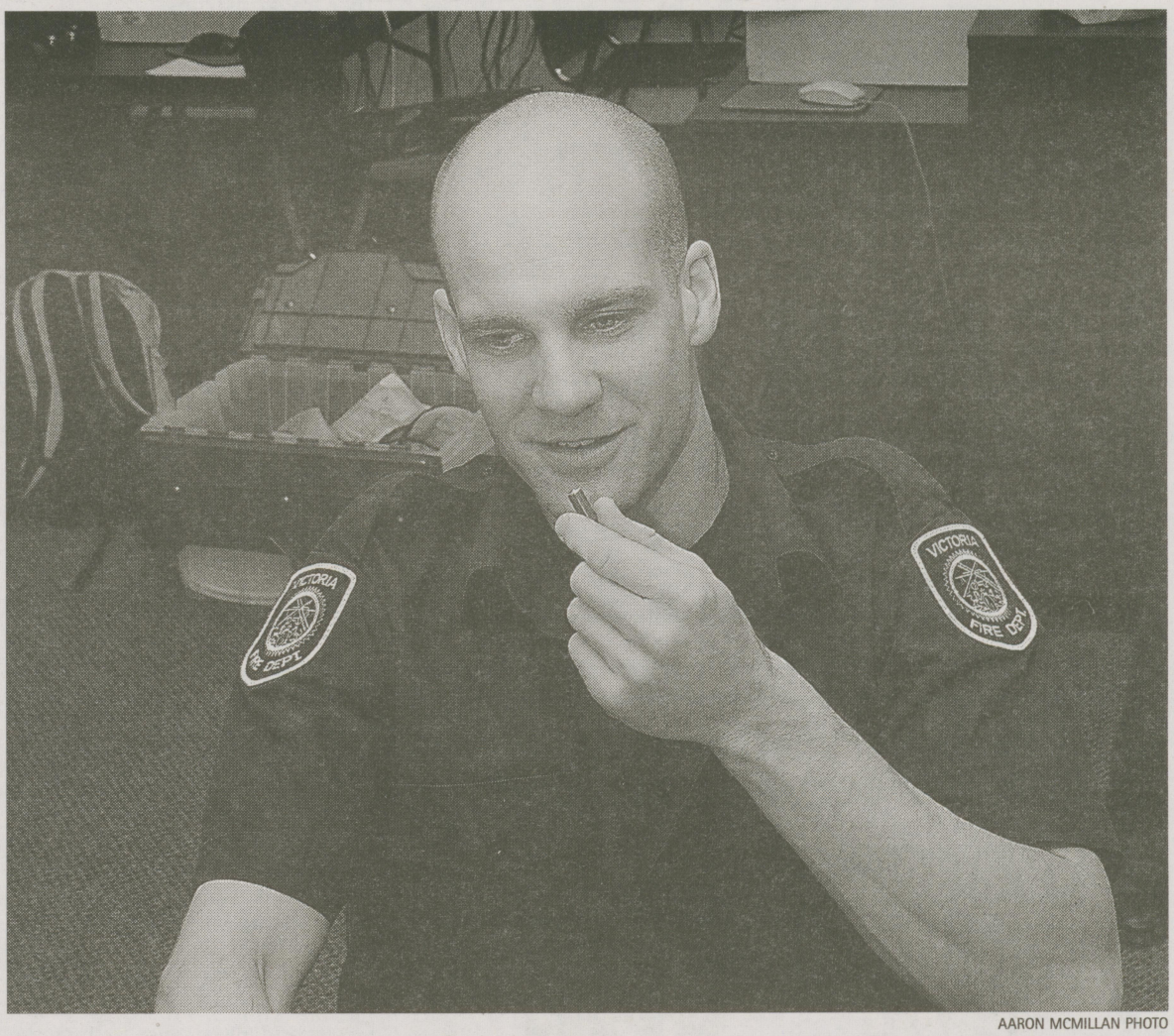
Wolski and her team are now halfway through their data collection process. After swallowing the pills, the firefighters were called to a mock car accident outside Victoria High so that researchers could test the tiny monitoring systems in real-life conditions.

"[Wolski] and her team from UVic were taking people aside, monitoring their core temp[s]," said Humber. "And then, after, there was an actual car accident and she was able to get some actual readings."

Humber went on to say that the firefighters who are volunteering for the study really appreciate the work that is being done.

Wolski said she is happy to have their help. "The partnership between UVic phys-ed [department] and the fire department has definitely been a win-win situation. . . . The Victoria Fire Department has been incredibly supportive, right from the fire chief down to the firefighters on the floor," she said.

Wolski hopes to release the results of her study as early as May.



AARON MCMILLAN PHOTO

Victoria firefighter Jeff Strang takes a pill that contains a transmitter capable of telling UVic researchers what his core temperature is when he's under stress.

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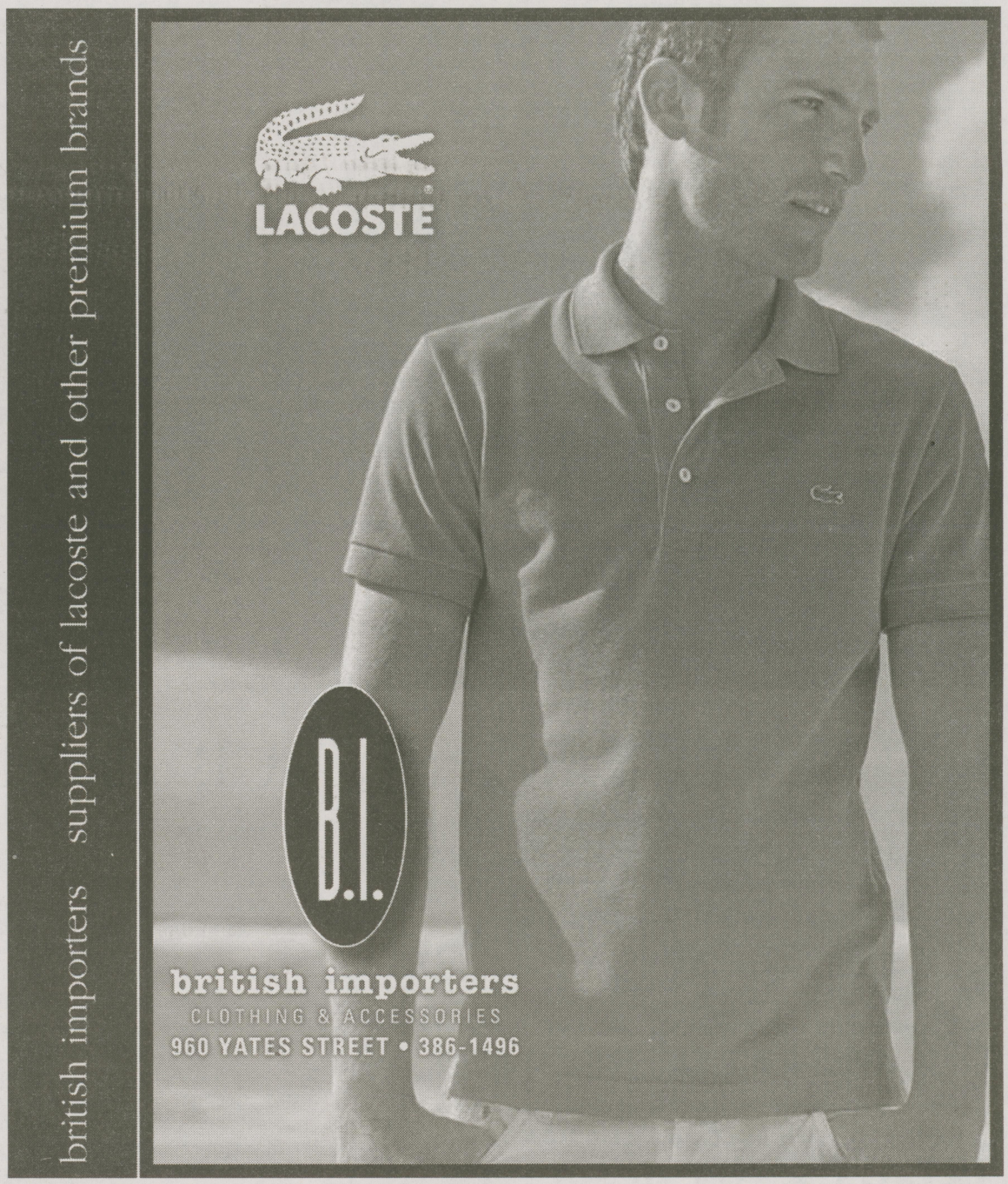

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No Foolin' for families

by Kim Armstrong

LINLEY FAULKNER PHOTO
This way to fun at the Family Centre's No Foolin' event March 31.

Pizza for breakfast is every small child's dream, and at the UVic Family Centre's upcoming No Foolin' fundraiser, children and adults alike will get the chance to eat all they want.

No Foolin' is a free, family-oriented breakfast party serving hotdogs, ice cream and, yes, pizza, in an attempt to raise both awareness and funding for UVic families living on-campus and off.

"It has to be a special, non-traditional breakfast, to surprise people," said the centre's acting director, Tomoko Okada.

Now in its third year, No Foolin', which runs from 7:30 to 9 a.m., is part of the Family Centre's annual April Fool's Day activities, held one day early this year on Friday, March 31.

The event raises money for the centre's emergency family fund, which helps out families in need.

"We didn't have enough funding to support family members in a financial emergency—for example, no groceries," said Okada. No Foolin' raises funds through donations, but it also raises awareness of the centre and of the problems student families face.

"We invited some key decision-making people, like the president, vice-president, deans, to increase their awareness level," Okada said. Last year, more than 350 people turned out, and the centre is hoping to increase attendance levels even more this year.

The family centre provides services to the approximately 500 people living in UVic's 181 family housing units and many more families living off-campus. "[There is a] myth that university students don't need some kind of support," said Okada. "Having a family, it's quite challenging."

The centre is also open to international students and their families, who, because of their status, may be having trouble finding financial support.

"As a current trend, many immigrants who came as skilled workers, they can't get any work in the Canadian labour market because they don't have any Canadian work experience," said Okada. They end up at places like UVic, working on their master's or PhD degrees in an attempt to become qualified to work in Canada. "Because of their international status, they are not eligible for benefits like student loans," he said.

The Family Centre offers families numerous services, including a twice-a-week Breakfast Club, play groups, story time and a toy share.

"It's very unique kinds of services we try to provide."

The centre is located in the family housing complex, at the corner of Lam Circle and Finnerty Road. For more information visit http://web.uvic.ca/family-centre.

UVSS down one director

by Megan Stewart

The question of accountability arose for the UVic Students' Society March 21, and the board is now short one director at large.

With barely one month remaining in the mandate for the current board, the UVSS requested the resignation of director at large Kyle Vucko because he missed too many board meetings without filing formal regrets.

UVSS chair Penny Beames called the regularly scheduled UVSS board meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. on the Tuesday night, but before she could move to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting, director at large Jonny Morris sidetracked the board with a point of order.

Morris pointed to section 10.3 of the UVSS bylaws, which states that any director who misses three regularly scheduled meetings in a semester without giving notice "shall be considered to have resigned."

Since taking office in May 2005, Vucko has missed five meeting without submitting his regrets to the board, and three of those absences fell in the summer semester. Of the 24 meetings so far this year, he has been absent from 10.

"Each of us on the board has been elected to give voice to the students we represent," Morris said in an e-mail to the *Martlet*. "How can that be achieved if directors aren't prepared to commit to attend board meetings?"

Both Morris and Vucko ran unsuccessfully for executive positions in this year's UVSS elections, but Morris said the timing of his action was not connected to the campaign.

He said he noticed "some trends pointing toward reduced accountability and transparency," and felt compelled to hold the board accountable.

Vucko arrived late to the March 21 meeting, but left immediately as the board informed him of his resignation.

"I guess I'm surprised but I am also disappointed," Vucko said outside the boardroom.

"The big thing is that it's so close to the end."

Vucko, who campaigned this and last year with a different slate than Morris, said the board could be hostile and divisive, and he even felt targeted.

"I was surprised by the politics. It's individuals on the board, though the slate divisions are not as bad now as they were in the beginning of the year," Vucko said. "I had been kind of ear-marked by [Morris] over the past couple of weeks. I guess it was coming."

SUB offered as space for exams

by David Karp

Students who require exam accommodations may now be able to use the Student Union Building instead of S-Hut.

The UVic Students' Society approved a motion March 21 that will make the rooms available to the university free of charge. The motion was discussed in a previous board meeting, but there was no vote as there were not enough board members in attendance.

Most exam accommodations are for students with disabilities. S-Hut has been used to handle some of the exams. Members of Access UVic, an advocacy group for students with disabilities, have called S-Hut "one of the worst places on campus" to write exams.

Access UVic was initially upset they were not consulted by UVSS chair Penny Beames in the construction of the proposed motion.

"We were offended that [Beames] didn't come talk to us. We were hurt," said Kyla Berry, the volunteer co-ordinator for Access UVic, adding that she was disappointed it took the UVSS all year to come up with a response to the issue.

The UVSS has taken steps to ensure that the lack of consultation with Access UVic won't happen again. "The motion was amended to include a stipulation that . . . discussion would also be entered into to ensure that [Access UVic] would be consulted," said Beames.

Beames acknowledged that the UVSS had been aware of Access UVic's concerns about S-Hut since summer. She said she tried to meet with Laurie Keenan, co-ordinator for the university's Resource Centre for Students with a Disability.

"We didn't get a chance to meet until February," Beames said. "But we didn't get a response until just recently."

Keenan confirmed that she was approached by the UVSS to discuss space concerns. "They mentioned that they have some quiet rooms downstairs in the SUB, and I said 'Wow, that would be really ideal.'

"We have so many exams going on at the same time that we use every bit of available space," she said. "And then we'll run out."

According to Beames, the resource centre will have access to any available rooms. "It's by no means a long-term solution," she added.

There is no guarantee the space will be used. Keenan said it is difficult to find invigilators for multiple locations, and pointed out that the SUB rooms have no private space, something that S-Hut has. "We book rooms all over campus, so it's just for overflow," said Keenan.

The majority of accommodated exams are currently held at S-Hut. The building, originally built for the military in the '40s, is shared with the National Coaching Institute.

Berry explained that exam writers are often interrupted by noise from the National Coaching Institute, the hut has inadequate lighting, and there are security concerns about writing exams in a remote location after dark.

UVSS chair results still unknown

by Matthew Gauk

Mike Waters is back in the running for chair of the UVic Students' Society. While the voting is long done, a controversy over eligibility due to alleged campaign violations has postponed the release of the chairperson totals.

Both Waters and incumbent candidate Penny Beames were initially disqualified by Ben Johnson, the chief electoral officer. The UVSS electoral committee overturned the disqualifications March 20.

On March 28 the board voted down an appeal made by Beames to reverse the decision to reinstate Waters. Three board members voted in support of the motion, six abstained, and four members voted against. Beames excused herself from discussion and did not vote.

Waters is currently on a co-op work term in Quesnel, B.C. and was reached by phone just after hearing the news.

"Man, I'm still just taking it in here," Waters said of his reinstatement. "I'm just glad it's over."

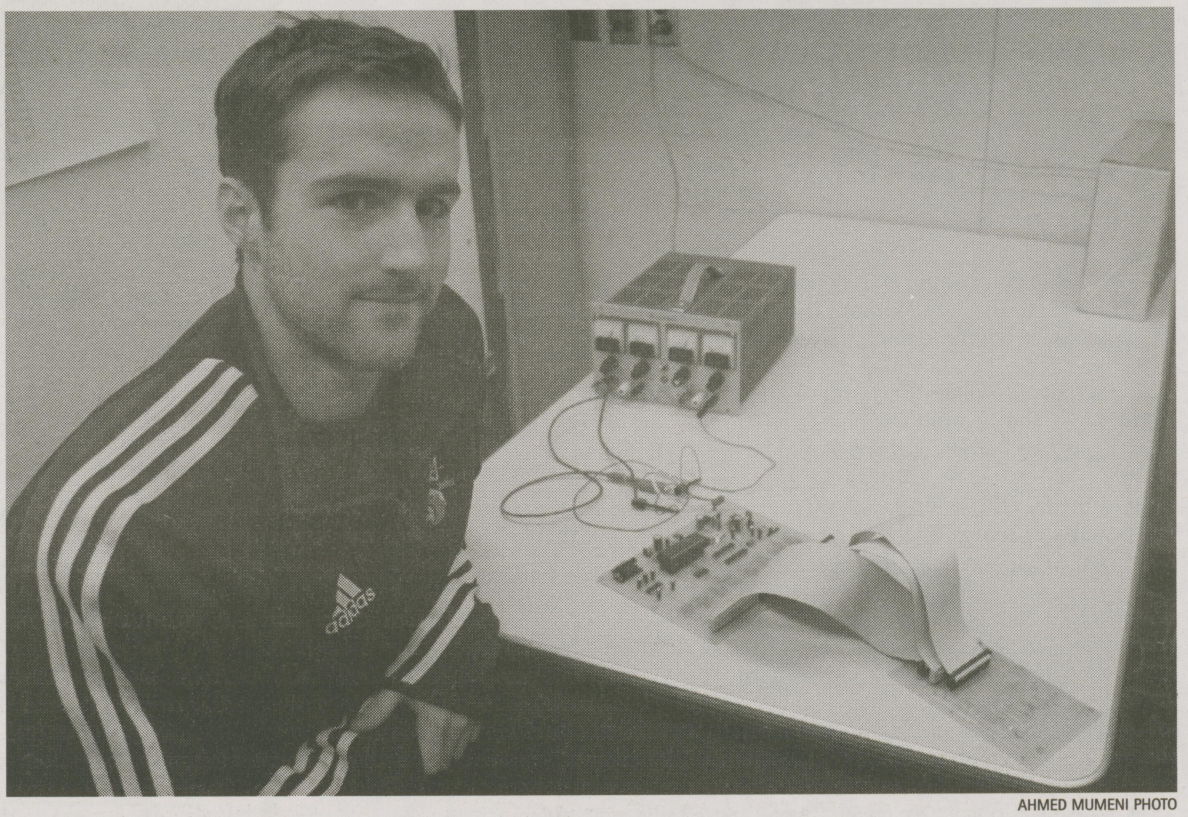
The voting took place in a four-hour, emergency meeting of the UVSS—which included an in-camera, hour-and-a-half consultation with the UVSS lawyer—at which the legitimacy of the board as a ruling body on the issue was called into question. Concerns over possible violations of the electoral policy manual in the process of dispute resolution prompted board members to contemplate future changes to policy.

The previous reinstatement of candidate Beames remained unchanged.

Unofficial reports put Beames and Waters in a neck-and-neck race for the position. Chadi Akouri, the third candidate, finished behind the others. Official results are expected within the next week. Voting took place March 8–10.

Student designs test for brain-scan technology

by Kim Armstrong



AHMED MUMENI PHOTO

Quinn Matthews has designed a high-tech device that mimics the brain's neuromagnetic signals.

Quinn Matthews spends his days in the basement of the Elliott Building, behind a door marked "Raman Spectrometer", quietly creating revolution.

The fourth-year physics student has spent his final undergraduate year working on a device that he calls the "Multi-dipole MEG Phantom" in his honours thesis, although he admitted that the name needs work.

Magnetoencephalography (MEG) is a non-invasive technology that maps neuromagnetic signals emitted by the brain.

"If you imagine your brain, there is a lot of electrical currents running back and forth as the neurons fire, and each of the neurons generates a magnetic field," explained Arif Babul, a UVic faculty member and an astrophysicist.

MEG reads these magnetic signals to determine where and in what sequence the brain is active during certain actions or stimuli. Matthews's device is intended to test the accuracy of MEG images by simulating the brain's magnetic patterns using very tiny magnetic field inductors.

"It's a new device to really see how well [MEG] can perform, and if it truly can pick up types of activity patterns," said Matthews, who spent the summer of 2005 working with Andrew Jirasek, a medical physicist on faculty at UVic, on a related project. Last fall, Jirasek and astrophysicist Arif Babul approached him independently about his current project.

"I wanted an artificial brain, but not a thinking brain . . . something that you could light up different parts of it and sort of simulate what the magnetic activity in the brain would be like," said Babul, who was introduced to MEG technology by his wife and fellow scientist Naznin Virji-Babul, the principle investigator of the Centre for Human Movement Analysis at Queen Alexandra and the research director with the Down Syndrome Research Foundation (DSRF). The DSRF owns a MEG—the only one in Western Canada according to the couple.

MEG technology has been in development since the '70s, but has vastly improved in recent years through advances in computer algorithms and hardware.

"It [a MEG] looks like those old-fashioned hairdryer things, except it's a dome, and it's got all these probes that are pointing towards your head," said Babul. "You can actually watch thinking going on."

Virji-Babul is just as enthusiastic.

"I think it's really, really exciting progress. The applications are going to be tremendous." She said the MEG is "very useful in getting dynamic information on the brain while it's working," especially in examining the developing brain, and post-stroke and head injury brain patterns.

"We can get a very clear picture of how the brain processes things. This could potentially lead us to very interesting ways to come up with [treatments]," she said.

The trick now is to see how accurately the MEG can pick up signals from the brain. "If you see a new result, you always want to have a model to see if it actually is what you're looking [at]," said Matthews. The device he is working on now is a much more sophisticated version of current testing apparatuses, able to emit much smaller signals in more complicated patterns, allowing scientists to recreate observed brain activity with a greater degree of accuracy.

"This kind of turned into a project for me in my final year—kind of like an honours thesis, I guess you'd call it," said Matthews, who has just submitted his thesis paper. "I've just been working on getting all the control and the timing worked out, and I'm going to continue working on it over the summer, and hopefully get something up and running by the end of the summer, maybe do some tests."

"He's an amazing student," said Babul. "There's very few students at the undergrad level that can push a research project to this extent, and to get a paper out of it a few months after finishing the first summer term of the project. It's just an amazing achievement, and what he's building right now . . . it's very practical, and a very important device."

The idea for the device was originally conceived through an examination of the motherboard from an old computer of Babul's, and it still follows form. Although the current board is fitted out with light emitting diodes (LEDs) so that Matthews can see what his device is doing, an identical board with magnetic field inductors instead of LEDs is in the works.

"At this point it's very much a prototype. There's a lot of work to go into it. It's really just getting underway," said Matthews.

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Editorial

Are B.C.'s ferries sea-worthy?

Cheers to the crew of the B.C. Ferries's Queen of the North and the residents of Hartley Bay. Without their quick response to the sinking of the ship, the outcome might have been much different.

The residents of Hartley Bay, who rose from their beds in the middle of the night, jumped in their boats and raced to the aid of the ship's passengers, are heroes, and we should be proud of their actions.

As it is, the fact that a ferry sank off of B.C. comes as a bit of a shock. These sorts of things might happen in other places, but they're not supposed to happen here in Canada.

There might have been a much different outcome—all but two of the 101 passengers and crew are believed to have survived—had the accident happened somewhere besides here.

In February, for example, a ferry in Egypt sank. The cause is still unknown, but a fire onboard earlier in the trip may have been involved. The passengers spent between 18 and 24 hours in the water. Of the 1,400 passegers on board, fewer than 400 are believed to have survived.

"A helicopter came above us and circled, we would signal and they ignored us," one survivor told reporters. "Our lives are the cheapest in the world."

There were also concerns that the Egyptian boat was old and unfit for sailing—which is where the two accidents, the one B.C. and the one in the Red Sea, start to sound a little bit similar.

The Queen of the North was nearly 40 years old. There were calls to scrap it and the other ferries of the same vintage as many as 10 years ago.

In fact, it was only last month that B.C. Ferries president and CEO David Hahn said the Queen of the North, the Queen of Prince Rupert and the Queen of Chilliwack, the boats on the northern routes, do not have modern safety features and need to be replaced as soon as possible.

He's singing a slightly different tune now, of course.

"This isn't about the ships necessarily being old," he after the accident. "This isn't about lack of safety. This ship was way off course, period."

The question of how the ferry, which was equipped with a global positioning system, a new autopilot system, three radar systems and electronic charting, came to hit an island has yet to be answered.

Officials have confirmed that the vessel was on autopilot, but that's all they're saying for now.

It might be all we find out for a while. Crew members have been advised not to speak publicly about the issue, including previous safety concerns about the boat.

Politicians are busy pointing fingers at their opposition, insisting it was the other side's policies that led to this disaster. (Which is not, by the way, the response we'd like to see from our "leaders.")

We can be proud of the response to this emergency, but there must be measures in place to prevent accidents like this in the first place. From here, it looks like the Queen of the North slipped through the cracks before it slipped under the waves.

We deserve better. Our lives are worth more than that.

Editorial topics are decided at weekly editorial meetings and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all staff members.

edit@martlet.ca

THUMBS UP | THUMBS DOWN

Thumbs Up

To George W. Bush using a nine-letter word correctly in a sentence. Bush claims that he wants to prove to Canadians that the United States "genuinely cares" by working to resolve issues like softwood lumber. We all know good ol' Dubbya's vocabulary isn't very good and by "genuinely" he could mean "doesn't give a" and by "cares" could mean "crap."

Thumbs Down

To the planned sculpture planned for Brooklyn's Capla Kesting Fine Art gallery next month. A life-size sculpture of a naked Britney Spears kneeling on a bearskin rug giving birth will soon be on display. Now that Britney's ghetto-ass is off the pop scene it's considered "fine art"? All they need now is a quote bubble above her head saying something really artsy and smart that Britney would say, like, "I'm sorry you don't have what I have."

EDITORIAL CARTOON | IT'S A WONDERFUL NIGHT IN VANCOUVER

ANTHONY FRATTAROLI GRAPHIC

Vancouver's drug-policy co-ordinator has recommended street-based alcoholics be given free alcohol. Unfortunately, free Lamborghinis are not yet available to people addicted to fast cars.

LETTERS

Elmer's attitude on students

Erik Haensel's March 16 article ("Speaking out about the Gaza Strip") began by demonstrating to readers that determining the aggressor in the Israel-Palestine conflict depends on completeness of perspective. In his analogy, a raggedly dressed person appears to be an aggressor but after the observer sees that the raggedy dressed person is being attacked, this initial analysis must be reconsidered. However, this analogy can be taken one step further because the observer may not yet have the full picture. If the observer learns that the "victim" has repeatedly attempted to destroy the supposed aggressor, the observer must again revisit her/his view of the situation.

My point is that the situation in the Middle East is complex and, contrary to Haensel's remarks, cannot be summarized in a simple analogy. The question of who wronged whom first can be debated indefinitely and in the end the debate will have little pragmatic effect on the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

What can help formulate positive change is legitimate discussion between both viewpoints with the aim of better understanding the conflict. Contrary to Haensel's report, this type of dialogue was not achieved at Elmer's talk. Elmer sidestepped all questions and comments that were made in reference to the aggressive actions taken by the surrounding Arab nations against Israel. Elmer's failure as a speaker was not limited to his selective reporting of history. Elmer used profanity in response to questions from students with contrary opinions to his own. As a visiting speaker, Elmer had the gall to tell UVic students who questioned his stance to "get lost." Being the only person in the room with a microphone, Elmer cut off students mid-question by talking over them. He then straw-manned their partial comments while leaving most of the question unheard and the students unable to respond. Elmer was belligerent towards students and many left the meeting feeling insulted and unheard.

As described by Haensel at the beginning of his article, one must strive to see the whole picture. Elmer's actions were not only disrespectful towards the students asking the questions but were also disrespectful towards the audience as a whole because he robbed them of the opportunity gain a fuller understanding of the conflict.

-Reuven Brandt

Let's go back to MySpace

by Stephanie Oliver,
the Xaverian Weekly

ANTIGONISH, N.S. (CUP) — You're at the bar. You meet someone interesting and you want to talk to them again. Rather than asking for their phone number, you ask for their address. E-mail address, that is.

MSN Messenger. You knew it was useful for keeping in contact with old friends, finding plans for Friday night, and procrastinating for hours on end. You might not know its covert function as a dating tool.

The popularity of instant messaging has created a whole new level between meeting someone and getting their phone number. Suddenly, asking for a number is too forward. Why not take advantage of the more neutral ground offered online? This built-in buffer has some positive aspects. It allows people to get to know one another on a more casual level rather than dealing with nerves, personalities, and the chemistry-killing potential of dead air. Messaging leaves plenty of time to think of something witty to say or to cut and paste a conversation to your friends for consultation. It allows you to set yourself as away if you want to devote yourself to someone special, appear offline if you're avoiding someone, or block any drunken regrets.

But MSN has its own built-in awkwardness. What if you're on the other end of the MSN applications? Are we going to start counting the days between meeting someone at the bar and adding them to MSN, or the minutes between when we're added and messaged? Are we going to worry she or he might delete us if things happen too fast?

Phone calls have a definitive beginning and ending. Even if contact is never made, you probably forget soon after. But once you join MSN lists, the memory is a permanent one, at least until someone gets deleted. It's a daily reminder of rejection, heartbreak, unrealized potential—who knew MSN was such a big player in the game?

Not only that, but you have less control on MSN than you think you do. Sure you've got your clever MSN name and your photo-shopped display picture, but if you have MySpace you're probably not that meticulous. Your crush is checking out your embarrassing lists, reading your unedited blogs, and looking at photos of you at your worst. So much for presenting a carefully crafted image tailored for your crush (that is, unless that image has permeated your entire online existence).

At least with the phone you can hide your narcissistic tendencies by existing as a voice rather than presenting every other facet of your life online. What happened to the good old days of swallowing your pride, asking for a number and calling the next day for the purpose of actually hanging out with the person again? Phone calls are a step in speeding up the process so you can actually hang out with someone in person, whereas MSN has the potential to stagnate in the getting-to-know-you stage.

Instant messaging is clearly useful in getting to know someone better, but the difficulty in translating typing into real-life contact makes it a dangerous decision in the dating game. As elaborate as emoticons are nowadays, they just can't replace the real thing.

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The University of Victoria's Independent Newspaper

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Truth, not spoof

'The issues and events discussed in the news are important and deserve to be taken seriously'

by Kim Armstrong

The truth is sacred, and it is the duty of a newspaper to uphold that truth. Therefore, I was appalled when I picked up a copy of the *Onion*, and found it to be full of the most unmitigated nonsense I have read in quite some time. The *Onion*, as I now know, is a spoof newspaper, but—and this is important—nowhere on the publication does it say this.

How many times, I wonder, has some innocent news-seeking individual scanned the newsstand and been arrested by headlines proclaiming such things as "Rotation Of Earth Plunges Entire North American Continent Into Darkness," "Millions Of Americans Succumbing To Sudden Elder Death Syndrome," or "Nation's Tall Asked To Stand In Back." People trust their papers to tell them what is happening in the world, and it is a breach of trust to come out with garbage like that.

How can we not, after being taken in by articles such as these, be just a little bit more gun-shy when reading the news? Trust in legitimate organizations such as the *National Post* or the *Times Colonist* drops. We need to be able to believe our reporters, as they are the backbone of free speech and information. If we can't believe what we are told, what can we believe?

Furthermore, the issues and events discussed in the news are important, and deserve to be taken seriously. Making light of disasters and contentious issues is a travesty and disrespectful. These issues deserve respect and tact, and spoof writing tosses that option out the window.

Poking fun at serious events is not only disrespectful, but it is also hurtful and insulting to the people involved. People don't want to be mocked in their hour of need.

Instead of making light of such subjects, in the claim that it grabs the attention of the public, perhaps spoof writers should get off their fannies and do something constructive to help. Laughing at disaster just isn't OK.

Spoofs set a dangerous precedent. If one can lie in the news and get away with it, where else can one lie with impunity? If this continues, accountability in jobs, healthcare and even the government could soon be a thing of the past.

Spoof writing is not a supplement to truth, it is a rape of our ideals and of everything we value. It is said that the pen is mightier than the sword, but this is one pen that should be cut down. Trust between human beings is the fabric that holds society together, and to put that at risk is frankly dangerous.

It seems that there is no system to keep a check on the credibility of our news providers, especially the smaller, independently run papers. Although there has been some criticism of larger news conglomerates, company-run papers have a greater interest in accuracy, given that they need to sell a certain number of papers to stay in business, and people need to trust a paper in order to want to buy it. At least news companies know how to get their news right!

I feel that it is the duty of the University of Victoria to ensure that its students are not exposed to such drivel and they should be working to remove all spoofs and non-serious news issues from the shelves of campus stores. I commend our student paper for conforming to such rigorous standards in ensuring that the material they print is legitimate.

New labour law raises hell in France

The world gets a new view of the French way of life

by Vanessa Lundgren

Every evening, after I come home after a day of teaching hyper-active French kiddies, I plop myself down at the kitchen table, make myself a pre-dinner snack, and switch on the TV to watch the news.

I've been living in France for the past seven months and working as an English teacher within the public school system. Since just about everything is centralized here, including the education system, I'm officially an employee of the État, a loaded term that would directly be translated to "state," but means much more than that. My employer is therefore the French government. I'm a part of a huge and complex bureaucratic system.

Is it one big happy family, then? Not by a long shot. In this country, where the maximum workload is 35 hours a week, where it's mandatory to have six weeks of vacation per year, where my lunch break is routinely two hours long and I regularly have Wednesdays off, what could there be to complain about?

According to my French peers—gearing up for their entry into the work force—lots. From my North American viewpoint, where it's all about hustling your butt to get yourself into a university then scrapping your way into a grad school or job, life here seems pretty good.

In this country, citizens are accustomed to being heavily taxed. They complain about it, but pay up expecting that their government will do its part in providing excellent social benefits, such as job security, superior health care, and decent education for all. The introduction of the Contrat Première Embauche (CPE), or First Employment Contract, a new labour law that makes it easier for employers to hire and fire young workers, has set the nation on edge. The CPE has been received with resistance and dissatisfaction that has led to weeks of protests.

The CPE affects young people, who now run a greater risk of being fired with little warning and for little reason by their employers. The law, which calls for two-year job contracts that employers can break with no explanation for people under the age of 26, was passed in an effort to produce better job flow and stimulate the economy.

Before the CPE, France was seemingly a land of security, where you ran little chance of getting booted by your boss.

The French economic attitude is beginning to resemble the increasingly global way of doing business—one unabashedly based on profit, capitalist in motive, and perhaps one could even say "American."

The protests have lasted for a few weeks already. Neither students nor government, are budging. To a foreigner like myself, who naively thought of France as eternally being the land of berets and baguettes, this disaccord between people and government surprised me. That it could take such a violent turn shocked me.

My romanticism of the country has been replaced with a grittier realism. And Paris, as lovely as this city is, is currently being trashed, as is the image of the country to the world.

I admire how the French have a knack for saying what's on their mind. They tell it as it is, but do you need to burn a car to get your point across?

As much as I whole-heartedly agree with the concerns of French students, the "break-and-burn" movement has a seriously damaging effect on how the world sees France.

UVic now able to support more refugee students

WUSC student refugee program referendum passes with flying colours

by Ashley Heaslip

It was about a year ago when the UVic branch of World University Service of Canada (WUSC) was confronted with one of the most difficult decisions we have ever had to make.

We received two dossiers from the Ottawa office containing names and information regarding two refugees in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya who were applying for acceptance to the student refugee program at UVic. These two students had seen their education halted due to conditions of war in their home countries, and wanted to continue their education in a safer environment.

Because of the funding that WUSC currently receives, it only has the means to accept one student into the program every two years. As a result, we had to choose between two equally deserving candidates, both of which had a very similar profile and the same need to come to UVic as student refugees. After a series of very long and emotional meetings, we decided that we shouldn't have to make this choice.

We approached the university administration for financial help and tried to convince them this is a program from which every UVic student would benefit. Although they responded favourably, we had no proof to offer them that this was an issue that students thought was important. So after a few months of collecting signatures to gauge people's support, we decided that it was time for things to change.

We presented our proposal to the UVSS board for a referendum to increase the student levy allocated to the student refugee program from $0.50 to $1.50 per full-time student, per semester. The response from the board was very supportive and was a sign of things to come. From then on, we began to promote the program like crazy throughout the entire university.

Of course, a feeling of anxiety was with us for five months, as we had to keep our tongues tied and not mention anything about a referendum until campaigning actually started. So when the campaign officially started, we were all ready to go around and let students know that it was in their hands to decide if we wanted to support this program and allow more people from other places to enjoy the same privileges as we do.

From the first day, we were all heartened by the overwhelmingly positive response from other students as we talked to them about the program. Many people had no idea they already contributed and thought that fifty cents was not enough—they wanted to see this fee raised.

Because budgets for many students are already tight, and in past elections candidates have campaigned to reduce fees, we expected there to be some resistance. That never really materialized in any significant way.

For the most part, people understood that this fee was not a simple charity, and that we would all benefit from the knowledge and experiences of people such as Jok Gai, who came to UVic in September 2005.

The referendum passed with an amazing 2,526 "yes" votes out of 2,978 total votes. This means that about 85 per cent of the students who participated in this election would like to see more refugee students at UVic. What is even more significant is that turnout for the referendum was higher than any of the executive positions for the UVSS board. This sends a powerful message to the administration about what UVic students value in their university experience, and where they should divert funds to in the future.

Thanks to the votes of UVSS and GSS members, WUSC will now be able to sponsor at least two students every year starting in 2007. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of those who came out and voted.

You have all made us very proud to be part of this university.

Does the *Martlet* make you angry?
Big whoop, wanna fight about it?
Write opinions for the *Martlet*.

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CRADLING IMPERIALISM:
Canada's live-in nanny program

by Amanda Hale

Glecy Duran woke at 4 a.m. to the sound of a roaring boiler and a girl whimpering in her ear. It was her employers' seven-year-old daughter, who had wandered down the staircase and into the boiler room, which also served as Duran's bedroom.

Duran had just worked a 14-hour shift, caring for five children in addition to cleaning seven bedrooms and six washrooms, and washing ten loads of dirty towels and sport uniforms.

The girl couldn't sleep, and she wanted her nanny to comfort her.

"I had no privacy at all, no separation from my job," said Duran. "I was a modern-day slave."

It is hard to believe Duran's situation happened in present-day Vancouver, B.C. It is harder to believe it is a common experience for women working in Canada, in a job promoted as a way to gain permanent resident status.

The live-in caregiver program

There are currently hundreds of female migrants working as live-in nannies in B.C., and over 4,000 in Canada.

The live-in caregiver program (LCP), funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, was developed to meet the growing demand for live-in domestic caregivers in Canada. A "caregiving" position, according to the program, includes caring for children, elderly people or people with disabilities. The LCP is aimed at people who have already been trained as caregivers in another country, and who want to immigrate to Canada. While the application process does not discriminate based on ethnicity or gender, the majority of caregivers are Filipina women working as nannies.

After 24 months of full-time work as a caregiver in Canada, the women can apply for landed status, and after three years, they can apply for Canadian citizenship. As part of the temporary visa requirements, the caregivers are confined to a period of three years in which to work the 24 months. This does not include time spent applying for new employment authorization, which a caregiver must obtain from Canadian Immigration if she wishes to change employers.

Caregivers must sign a one-year contract with their first employer, stating that they will live in the household and not apply for other jobs. For their part, employers sign a contract to pay caregivers at least the local minimum wage, and to provide room and board. Caregivers are expected to pay for their passports, flight tickets and medical exams, and to pay the same taxes as Canadian citizens.

Duran came from the Philippines in 1998. She was employed by a wealthy couple to help take care of their youngest daughter, who had undergone several brain tumour operations and functioned at the level of a three-year-old, according to Duran. Along with cleaning and supervising four other children, Duran was responsible for giving the young girl her medications and driving her to regular doctor appointments, a responsibility Duran found physically and mentally draining.

Her room in the boiler room was cramped and noisy, and she rarely had time to eat during the day.

However, she remained in the household because she needed to complete 24 months in the caregiver system in order to become a permanent resident.

"If I say no, I have to look for another employer and risk getting deported," said Duran. "I have no choice but to stay."

ANTHONY FRATTAROLI GRAPHICS

Recipe for exploitation

The LCP contract is controversial, according to some migrant workers' advocacy groups and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW).

Jo-Anne Lee, a women's studies professor at the University of Victoria and former chair of CRIAW, says the contract binds caregivers to one employer and creates conditions for exploitation.

Even though caregivers have the option to leave, they feel pressured to stay because of the three-year time limit in which they have to work a full 24 months.

"As soon as you set up that kind of unequal power relationship within the legislation and regulations, you are really facilitating a context in which abuse can happen," said Lee.

Other problems with the contract, according to Duran, are that employers can manipulate the program's regulations to make caregivers work beyond their contract requirements. Duran's employers used their knowledge of the program to pay her less money than she deserved. After three months her employers dropped her monthly payments from $900 to $200, though her workload remained the same. When Duran asked for the balance, she said her employers threatened her.

"They would tell me 'We know you have 12 months left, you don't have any choice,'" said Duran. "It was like they owned me.

"The program is very racist against third-world women. It's not humane."

Although Immigration Canada requires a one-year contract before it will issue a work permit for the LCP, the program does provide the opportunity for participants to quit before their contract expires: the caregiver can apply to Immigration Canada to get a "bridging work permit," which allows two to three months for the caregiver to register a new employer. According to Immigration Canada, there are no cumulative statistics on how many caregivers have successfully changed jobs.

However, since the program began women have been reporting physical and emotional abuse from employers as well as poor working conditions. The Employment Standards Branch is the government office that guarantees the rights of employees in B.C., and is where caregivers can register complaints.

"We do get a few calls [from caregivers] each day on average," said Chris, an agent at the Employment Standards Branch who preferred not to give her last name.

"But you have to take into consideration that we take calls for all of B.C."

The branch offers self-help kits designed to assist employees and employers to resolve problems themselves. If the problem has not been resolved within six months, the branch then gives the employer 15 days notice to pay the caregiver. If a settlement still hasn't been reached, the branch will proceed with arbitration.

When Duran first called the Employment Standards Branch, they told her she should talk to an officer at Citizenship and Immigration Canada. So Duran called Immigration; she was told it was not in their field to help her, and that she should call Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). But when she called the HRSDC, Duran said they questioned whether she was telling the truth. Frustrated, Duren called the Employment Standards Branch again.

She says the officer asked her if she could sacrifice two more months until she got permanent residence.

"I told him 'I can't stand it, I can't survive," said Duran.

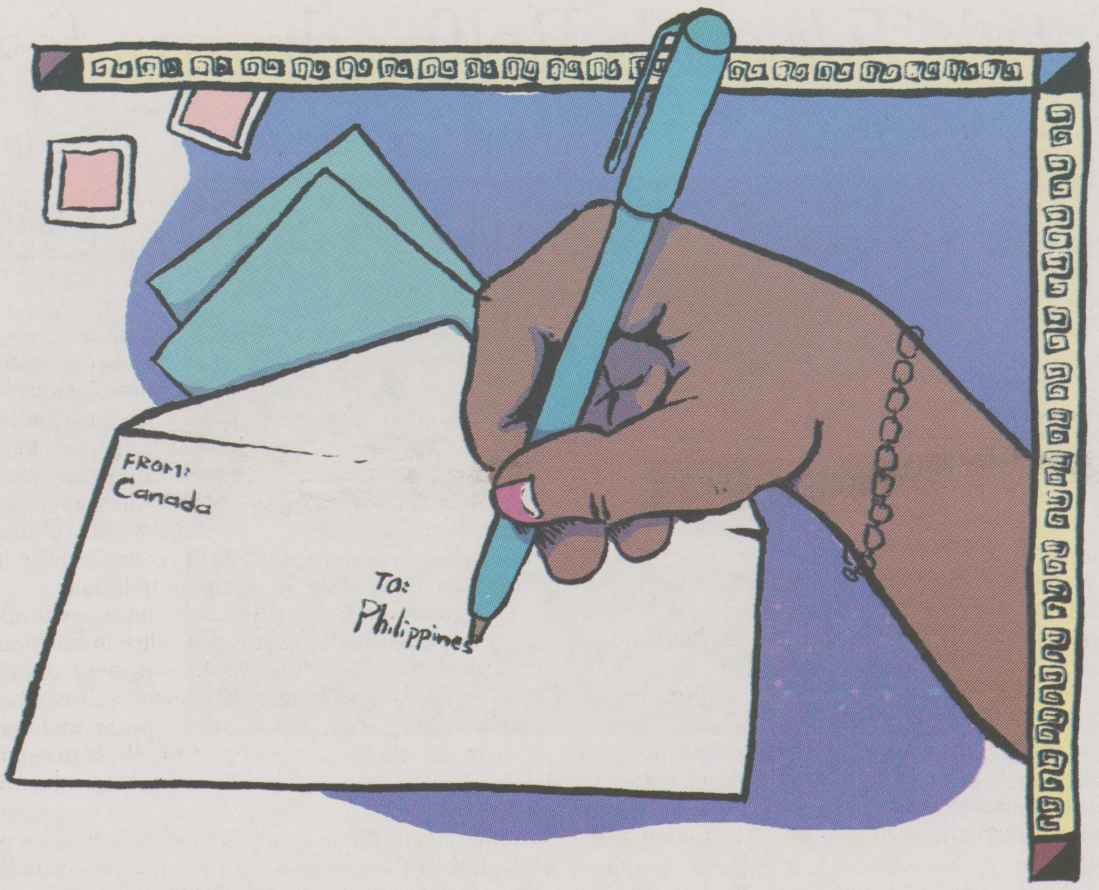
But she did survive the next two months. She kept a careful record of the money her employer owed her, which after nine months totalled $5,000.

Then she contacted Vancouver's Philippine Women Centre, where the volunteers helped her fax a balance request to her employers. It worked, and Duran received her paycheque.

"Thanks to them, I got was what owed to me," said Duran.

Duran's experience with her complaint process is common, according to Marilou Carrillo, chair of Philippine Women Centre.

"Immigration will not deal with Employment Stan-



dards Branch and the Employment Standards Branch will not deal with immigration. That's a problem," she said.

Carrillo said the centre receives about eight complaints specifically about the LCP each day.

Duran is now a full-time volunteer at the Philippine Women Centre. She says she works daily to empower the Filipino community and to encourage live-in caregivers to develop a critical analysis of the LCP.

"My involvement inspired me," said Duran, "so I want to organize others and encourage them to be strong. We need to ask ourselves 'Why does a program like this exist in Canada?'"

Trading Lives

Domestic caregivers have long been a part of Canada's trade networks—the 1955 Caribbean Domestics Scheme, an agreement between the governments of Canada, Jamaica and Barbados, sent single, childless women from Jamaica and Barbados to work for wealthy families in Canada.

The Canadian government's Foreign Domestic Movement of 1981 allowed migrant women into Canada if they could find employment as a domestic worker, but the women were not granted citizenship. This program expanded the caregiver trade network into a more regulated federal immigration program. It was replaced by the LCP in 1994.

Lee says the live-in caregiver system began as a way to lower the burden of child rearing for upper-class women. Working mothers can't stay at home to care for their children, said Lee, and instead of providing a national child-care program for families, Canada facilitated the entry of cheap labour from the south, primarily from English-speaking countries in the Caribbean.

"It's always been a way to provide domestic work to upper-middle-class families," said Lee.

But Canadian families aren't the only ones to benefit from the trade. Currently, the $8.5 billion US sent back to the Philippines by its overseas workers each year is the country's biggest source of revenues, which it relies on to pay off its foreign debt, mainly to the United States.

After the Philippines' economic collapse during the East Asian financial crisis of 1998, Philippine government agencies encouraged male and female migrant workers to go abroad in order to send money home, although currently over 65 per cent of overseas workers are female.

The Philippine government funds six-month college programs designed to meet the standards of the LCP. Meanwhile, its government hospitals are facing a nursing shortage—there is a one to 100 nurse to patient ratio—and poor working conditions in hospitals.

"Despite these alarming figures, government agencies send conflicting messages on whether nurses and doctors are encouraged to go abroad or to stay and serve the country," reports Dr. Jaime Galvez-Tan, former vice-chancellor for research of the University of the Philippines-Manila and executive director of the National Institutes of Health-Philippines.

With 40 per cent of the Philippine population living below the poverty level, it isn't surprising that Filipino citizens are willing to work overseas while their families remain in the Philippines.

"That kind of incentive is economical, there isn't a choice," said Lee. "If they were able to get good paying jobs in the Philippines they would all prefer to stay."

The nanny and the state

If an employer wants to hire a live-in caregiver, they can visit a caregiver employment agency website like International Nannies, which is based out of Vancouver. The home page displays a colourful graphic of the globe with a teddy bear clinging to its side. The "nanny profiles" are a montage of photographs accompanied by information on nationality, age, marital status, educational background and years of work experience. The smiling faces of the Filipinas posing with children, all share a striking similarity—university degrees. Their degrees include bachelor's degrees in respiratory therapy, business management, nursing and computer science.

Why have these women come to Canada as nannies, instead of doctors or entrepreneurs?

Part of the reason is that professional associations like the teachers' federation and registered nurses' federation do not recognize foreign credentials.

In addition, skilled immigrant workers are backlogged in the government's current system. The application process is extremely competitive and it can take between 30 and 60 months to determine how an applicant will enter Canada's work force.

Coming as nannies seems to be the most accessible way for these women to get to Canada.

However, Canada might be losing out on a large quantity of skilled workers by restricting live-in caregivers to the service sector, especially when there is a demand for qualified nurses and teachers in the work force. As caregivers remain in the service sector, they run the risk of becoming "de-skilled."

In April 2005, Canada launched a Foreign Credential Recognition Program to improve the process for evaluating foreign credentials. The program plans to dedicate $68 million over six years to "facilitate the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications for both regulated and non-regulated occupations." In other words, it will help skilled workers find suitable jobs in Canada, and encourage Canadian employers to accept foreign credentials during the hiring process.

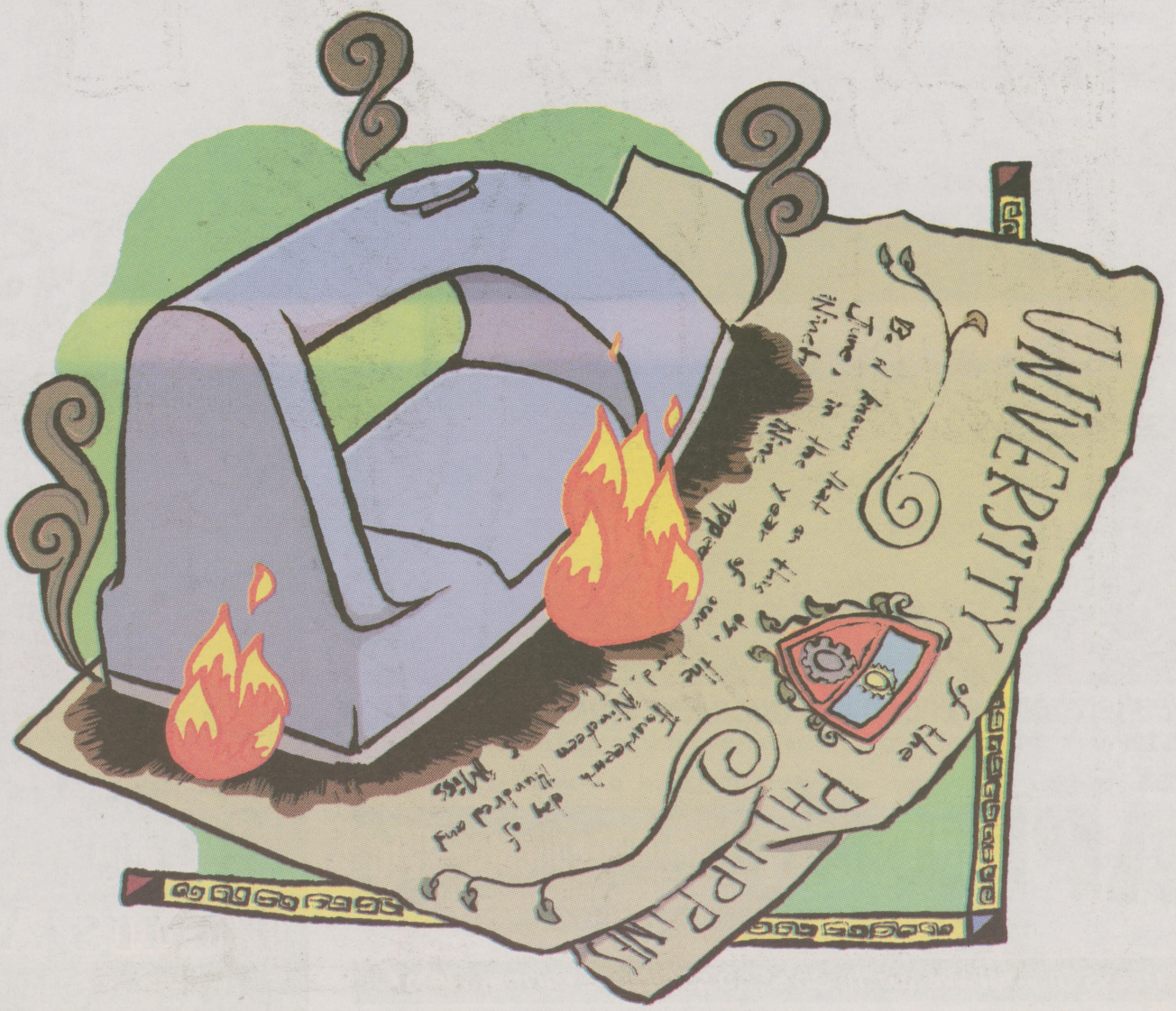
Meanwhile, said Lee, many migrant workers are slipping through the cracks of Canada's labour policies. She advocates amending the legislation to center on the women's movement agenda and to recognize foreign trained professionals.

"There's a real need for a huge mind shift," said Lee. "Because [caregivers] are not citizens of the nation, the nation, being Canada, doesn't see this as a priority issue. I think that more awareness is needed, and more people need to see that we're all connected as part of a global community."

Home away from

Duran has lived in Canada for eight years now. Most of her family remains in the Philippines, including her parents, cousins and aunts. Although she will probably return for visits, she said it's not likely that she will ever move back.

"You know, it's my home sweet home," said Duran. "But there is no opportunity for jobs there."

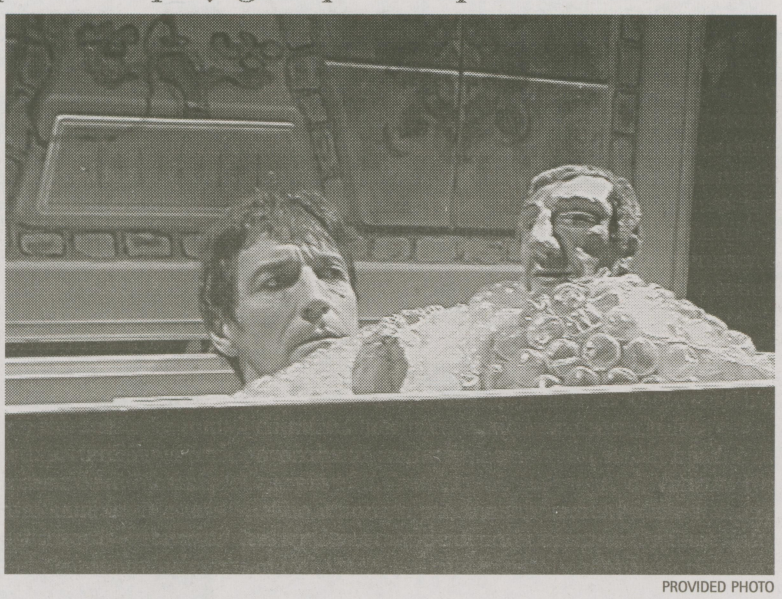


The Winter's Tale ends Belfry drama fest with a bang

Shakespeare's lengthy problem play goes picaresque and audience-inclusive in this energized production

What: *The Winter's Tale*, by William Shakespeare
Where: The Belfry Theatre, 1291 Gladstone
When: March 23 to April 1 @ 8 p.m.; April 2 @ 2 p.m.
How much: $16 to $20, call 385-6815

by Briony Smith



PROVIDED PHOTO

Actor Peter Hall takes a bath with the puppet King Leontes.

Many people put seeing a Shakespeare production on par with a dental check-up—it's necessary, but that doesn't mean you have to like it. The Belfry's ongoing production of *The Winter's Tale* makes for an odd and unexpected treat—it's funny, unique, and full of surprises.

Not to mention puppets.

Runaway Moon Theatre's *The Winter's Tale* does indeed feature a number of different kinds of puppets. Marionettes, rod puppets, and hand puppets are wielded by actors who move about the stage, interact with the puppets, and take over performing for the puppets at times.

"There was no hard-and-fast rule of when the character is a human and when it's a puppet," says actor and puppeteer Peter Hall. "It was whatever served the scene best." A good entry point to the play's particular style, he found, is a scene early in the play when a king contemplates his wife's possible infidelity. The scene switches between what the puppet is saying and the internal dialogue spoken by the actor.

The originality doesn't stop there—the king delivers the lines as he reclines in a bathtub made from a deep freezer. "We really worked to deconstruct the typical Shakespearean style to make it more accessible," Hal says. "If you make it too serious, you push people away."

Hall feels that the magical elements in the fairytale-like play work well with puppetry. "The puppets make the emotions, that world of fantasy, more accessible, as there are no actors in the way. You can follow the story more easily," he says. "The puppets allow the emotions to sneak in there, through the back door, and allow you to really feel them."

In terms of connecting with the audience, *The Winter's Tale* has the element of surprise on its side. "With many of Shakespeare's storylines, everyone knows the ending already, so it's about how you get there," says Hall. "But here [with *The Winter's Tale*] most people don't even know the general plot, so you can draw them in more."

The story's setup is a compelling one. King Leontes of Sicilia (Peter Hall) is convinced that his wife Hermione (Lois Anderson) is cheating on him with his best friend King Polixenes of Bohemia (Thomas Jones). He has her banished and orders their newborn to be killed. He commands his servant Camillo (Allan Zinyk) to poison his friend, but the servant lets Polixenes in on the plan, and they escape to Bohemia where Leontes' baby is found and raised by a pair of shepherds (Camille Gingras, Lois Anderson).

The production physically moves from the studio (Sicilia) to outside the Belfry Theatre and then back into the completely rearranged space (Bohemia). The farmers' small stature is represented by the actors' walking on their knees, complete with stuffed legs, rubber boots and all.

The troupe also took one of the longest scenes in Shakespeare and added a dollop of wackiness to it—live music plays over the sheep-shearing festival, where lamb-costumed children get their "hides" shorn off (a kazoo providing the razor sound effects), and audience members are encouraged to dance. "We wanted to break up the conventions of Shakespeare and see what we could do," says Hall.

The effortless, hilarious, excellent performances by the actors and the jolly let's-put-on-a-show vibe of the production belies the hard work that went into the communal adaptation of the third-longest play in Shakespeare's canon. After their first director quit and their second choice was busy, the Runaway troupe figured, "Why don't we just do it ourselves?"

"We had already done all the conceptual stuff and were in the mind-set, so we thought 'Let's go for it,'" says Hall. "But it was exhausting! If you weren't in a scene, you were directing it. It wouldn't have worked for most productions!"

The miniscule amount of rehearsal time wouldn't have worked either, even before the mobile aspect of the production was factored in—the cast was doing blocking and run-throughs right up to opening night.

Yet their gamble has paid off handsomely. This wonderful play is a true original, and that's something that everyone can—and should—embrace.

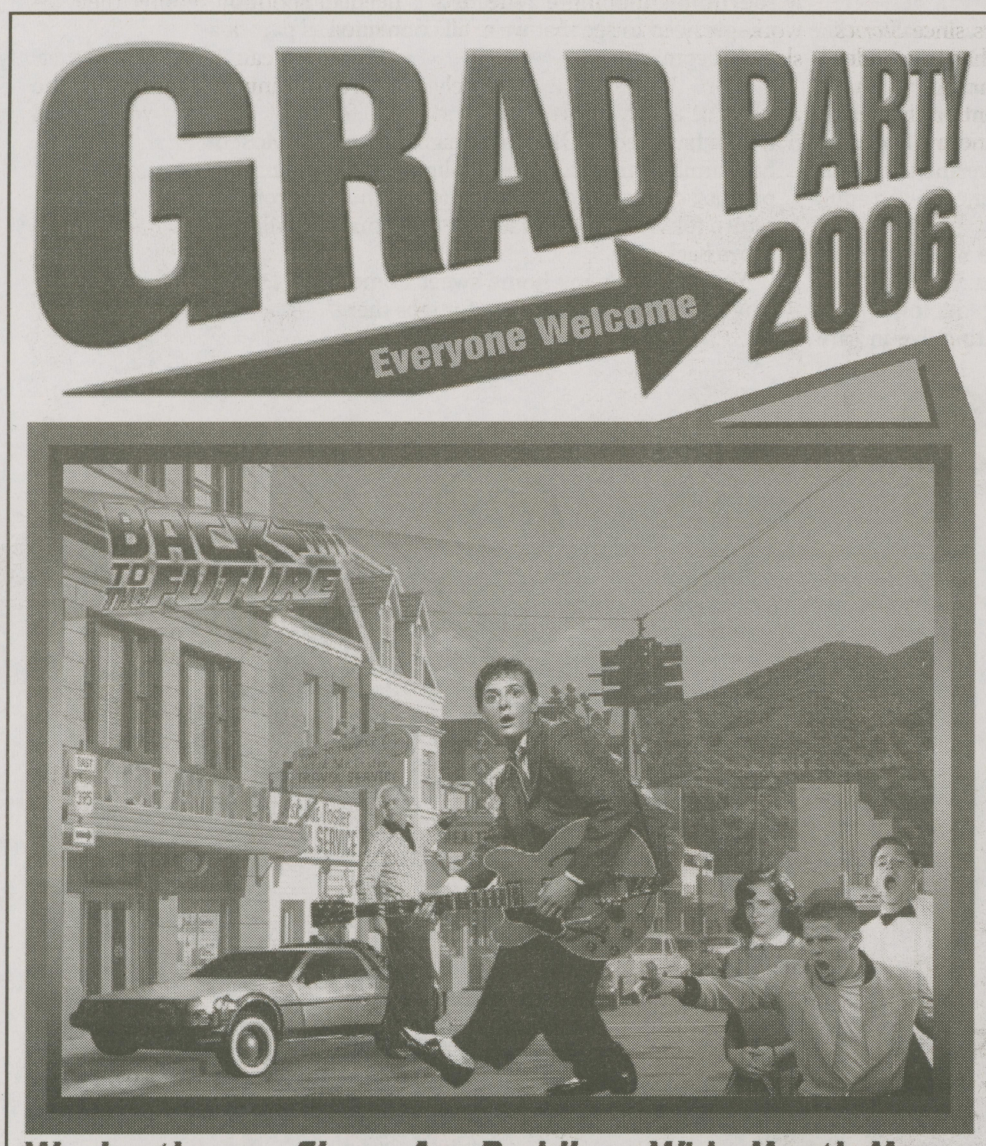
SHAKESPEARE'S PROBLEM PLAYS

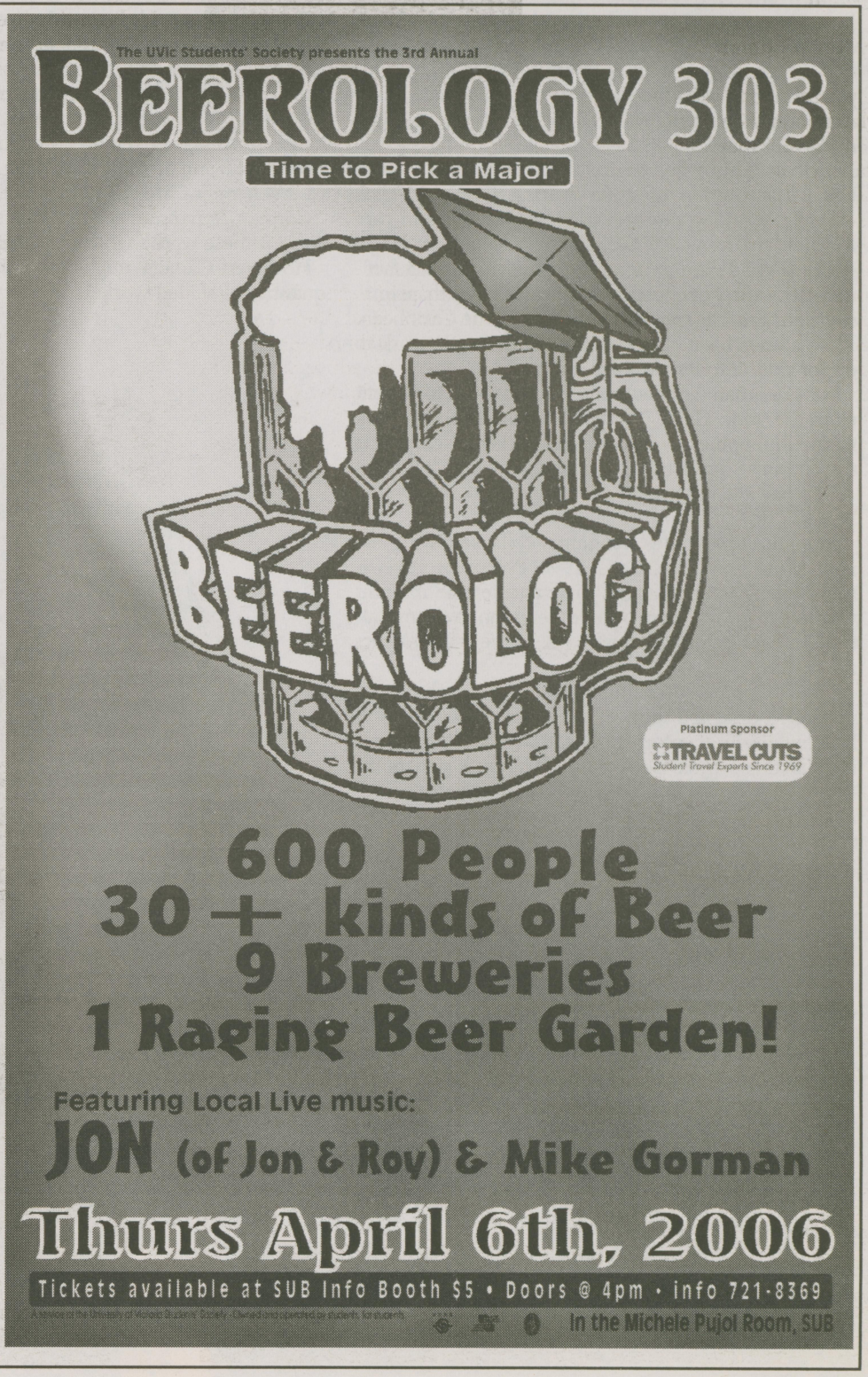
The first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays, the *First Folio* of 1623, subdivided them into Comedies, Histories and Tragedies. While many of the plays comfortably fit one or other of those categories, a handful are less easy to pin down, as they deal with too many complex moral issues to be comfortably labelled "comedy," but they also lack the essential ingredients of tragedy.

The three plays usually labelled "problem comedies" or simply "problem plays" were all written roughly between 1602–04, and are *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Many critics have applied a similar label to the earlier *The Merchant of Venice* and even to *Hamlet*, though few have followed the example of scholar Ernest Schanzer, whose book, *Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (1963), ranked *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* alongside *Measure for Measure*.

For understandable reasons, the problem plays have never ranked among Shakespeare's most popular, and they have consequently been somewhat neglected by both cinema and television. Indeed, there have been no big-screen adaptations of the three core plays.

-www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1083042/index.html





A picture of violence in the Middle East

Musician and activist Michael Franti returns to Victoria with a moving new documentary of wartime experiences

What: An Evening with Michael Franti
Where: McPherson Playhouse, #3 Centennial Square
When: Saturday, April 1 @ 8 p.m., doors at 7
How much: $24.50, call 386-6121

by Melanie Tromp

PROVIDED PHOTO AND IMAGE

Franti travelled to Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Baghdad and the Gaza strip to film *I Know I'm Not Alone* .

Refugee children in the politically restless Gaza strip barely glance up when a barrage of machine-gun bullets cut through the neighbourhood at dusk. These defiant kids even throw rocks and shout at Israeli tanks rolling through their marketplace.

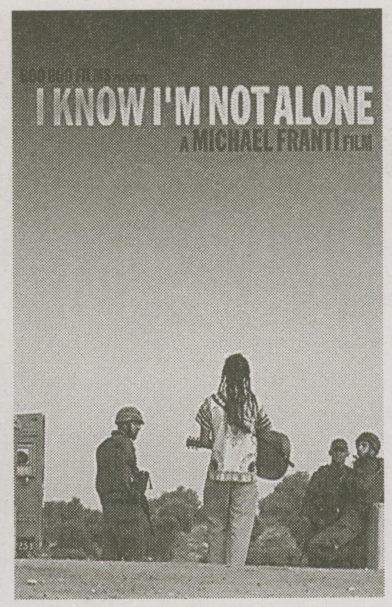
But when a tall, black, dreadlocked "rast-American" walks down the street plucking out a tune on his guitar, they come to a mystified halt.

The experiences and opinions of these kids, their parents, their military, their compatriots and their enemies don't exist in American media—so a frustrated Michael Franti, frontman of the hip-hop group Spearhead and celebrated political activist, packed his video camera and guitar on a trek to the Middle East to expose the human cost of war in countries rife with fear and violence.

"Three years ago, on the eve of the first bombing in Baghdad, I was in yoga class," says Franti, on the phone from Telluride, Colo. "At the end of class we meditate, and it was there that I asked myself what I would tell my two sons if an army was going to bomb [our hometown of] San Francisco."

He didn't come up with an answer, but three years later the groove guru's pet project materialized into a feature-length documentary, *I Know I'm Not Alone*, which screens at Victoria's McPherson Playhouse on April 1.

Franti's unique approach to the crises in Iraq, Israel and Palestine was to simply draw a crowd on the street corner with his music and then begin to ask them questions about their experience.



"I knew that I wanted to be a listener," explains Franti between dinner and a screening of his film. "I remember being surprised that [Iraqis] believed George Bush; they believed that he would topple Saddam's regime and hand them back their country."

Franti's video diary has been skillfully interwoven with his songs to create a raw and unique documentary aiming to "use music to break down the communication barrier and allow people to share and understand each other's experience in wartime," he says.

In keeping with the musical motif, Franti's group speaks with an underground Iraqi heavy metal group that was forced to hunt down instruments to play in secret during Saddam Hussein's regime.

Franti himself dodged persecution, with the cameras still rolling during his narrow escape from a barrage of Israeli bullets after the poet inadvertently walked into a Palestinian "forbidden zone" with his guitar.

The film's personal and intimate style resonates with crowds of all ages, drawing the audience into troubled war zones through a gripping visual and musical mosaic. Franti's enchanting travel journal unifies humanity at its finest and its worst into a sincere and influential view of the Iraq and Palestine occupations, upholding the artist's original mandate to create art that questions modern society.

"I want people to begin to ask questions that were never asked after the tragedy of September 11," says Franti. "Where do we [America] want to go as a nation? Do we want to be a nation that is feared? Do we want to continue seeing our country spend $1 billion a month to keep this war going while our schools and health care system back home suffer? And do we want [to be] creating more enemies?"

An Evening with Michael Franti includes a screening of I Know I'm Not Alone, *a Q&A with Franti, and a solo acoustic performance. Visit* www.rmts.bc.ca *for more ticket information.*

CD | MATCHBOOK ROMANCE

Matchbook Romance
Voices
Epitaph

by Kevin Ehman

If you're getting ready to listen to Matchbook Romance's new disc, *Voices*, you may want to set an alarm clock. This 11-song snoozefest is guaranteed to put you to sleep.

Not in the recent history of "punk" rock has there been a more boring album. If there's a single positive, it's that MR has created a new genre of music that a friend of mine aptly labeled "dronecore": drawn-out, melodramatic tripe at $15 a pop.

A serious departure from the band's engaging debut, *Stories and Alibis*, *Voices* loses the edge and depth of that vital first entry. Gone are the well-timed screams and double-kick breakdowns, replaced by mediocre guitar solos and warbled high notes. Virtually every song on the album is interchangeable, including the first single, "Monsters."

It's been three years since *Stories and Alibis*, and one has to wonder what MR was planning all that time. The epic reinvention that lead singer/songwriter Andrew Jordan thought was *Voices* is actually an epic regression. The only thing really worth mentioning is the artwork—very avant-garde for a CD sleeve.

In short, *Voices* is an extremely disappointing effort from a band that seemed to have the world at their fingertips.If MR plans on surviving for a third album, they'll need to seriously rethink their direction.

If not, you can expect to find their entire diminutive canon in the "5 for $5" bin at your local Trade-n-Save.

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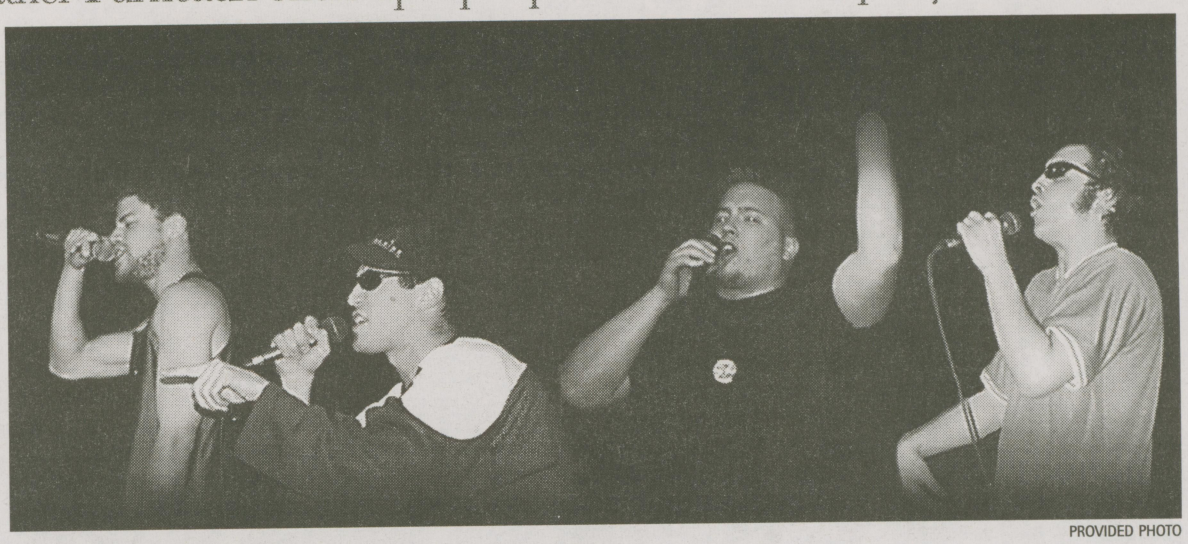
It's hard out here for an April Fool's pimp

UVic PR ingenue Heather Furneaux offers up a pimp-and-ho costume party with live, local hip-hop

What: Pimps N' Ho's Fools Day Party
Where: The Visualfxtc studio, 715 Johnson, 2nd Floor
When: Saturday, April 1, 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.
How much: $10 costumed, $12 without

by Steve Carey



PROVIDED PHOTO

Island hip-hop group Get Some won a Music B.C. grant to record at Vancouver's Battle Axe Studios.

Pimps, ho's, players, haters, tricks, marks, mark-ass tricks, trick-ass marks, skeezers, skanks and skigscags—on April 1, the trick's on you at a Pimps N' Ho's Fools Day Party.

The event features local hip-hop acts, graffiti artists, a film component and a pimp-and-ho costume contest. The event is organized by UVic public relations student Heather Furneaux and her company, Clove and Anchor Entertainment.

"The [costume] theme is pimps and ho's," said Furneaux, whose last event, A Black Valentine Cabaret, had over 300 attendees.

"But if you come in as a pimping Santa, we're not going to kick you out."

Vancouver Island hip-hop group Get Some is headlining. The foursome opened for Naughty by Nature and 2 Live Crew, and has a devoted local fan base. Local DJ and promoter Degree One has recently joined the group, who was awarded a Music B.C. Grant to record at the Swollen Members' Battle Axe Studios in Vancouver.

Those who attended the Alkaholiks show in Victoria on March 3 should remember MC and DJ duo Milz-n-Rhay. DJ Rhay, from Victoria hip-hop group Delux, banded together with hard-rapping Milz in August 2005. Milz-n-Rhay will have a CD available this summer.

CFUV hip-hop host DJ Stallion will also be performing, and Furneaux has booked rapper Zes Nomis, a thick-voiced MC with crowd-moving beats. Nomis has performed with local acts like 2000 Victoria DMC winner DJ Verse, Moka Only and Just B.

The event incorporates a costume contest with prizes sponsored by Platinum Lounge. A number of graffiti artists as well as Duane Dibolt from T-shirt shop Vortex will be showcasing artwork. Dancers and models Laura Prittie and Jennifer Paterson will be in the Visualfxtc studio's shadow box, a second stage in the studio providing backup dancing and entertainment through the night.

Furneaux said her coursework at UVic has helped improve her public relations skills and her networking abilities.

"Putting on a show is so involved," said Furneaux, who has been spending her nights doing promotion, ordering posters and distributing handbills. The idea for the hip-hop show came at the start of March, and the artist confirmation only came the week of the 20th. "It's the little details [like] making sure you have enough change for floats [and] finding someone to run the lights . . . that make for a huge learning experience."

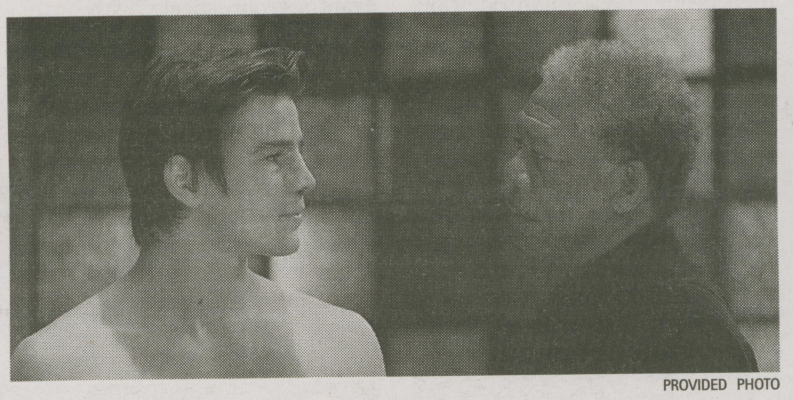
After working with him on A Black Valentine Cabaret, Furneaux has again hired Oily Films' Scott Amos to provide film projections. This time he'll project old gangster videos to provide visuals during the hip-hop acts.

The event will have a licensed bar, so ID is required. Costumes are preferred, but not needed if you're pimp enough as is.

MOVIE | LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN

The movie-est movie of the year

by Briony Smith



PROVIDED PHOTO

Josh Hartnett meets Morgan Freeman, a.k.a The Boss.

Lucky Number Slevin is a wonderfully movie movie. No, that's not a typo. A movie movie is one that can't be anything but a movie—people have never talked, schemed, or looked this good. A really good movie movie reminds us of why we love going to the movies in the first place—we want to be entertained. *Lucky Number Slevin*, while delightfully clever, isn't a film for the ages, but when a marvelous movie movie like this gets going, who cares?

Slevin heralds the triumphant return of Josh Hartnett, the uber-likeable gangly brooder who seems like someone you might know, a quality that serves him well in the role of Slevin, a regular Joe who's having an odd couple of days.

After losing his job and catching his girlfriend in the sack with another guy, Slevin takes his friend Nick up on a visit to the city to forget his troubles—but his troubles come along for the ride, and he's mugged en route to Nick's place. Enter two goons who think he *is* Nick and demand that he come see "The Boss" over some unpaid debts. Their exchange goes something like this:

Goon 1: The Boss wants to see you.

Slevin: Who's The Boss?

Goon 1: The guy we work for.

Slevin: I'm not the guy you're looking for. I don't live here.

Goon 1: Well, you look like the guy who lives here.

Slevin: Then you don't know what the guy who lives here looks like.

Goon 2: What he means to say is that you look like you live here.

Goon 1: Yeah, that's what I meant to say.

The movie is filled with the kind of talk that makes you squirm with delight.

It's like the extra-eloquent dialogue in Kevin Smith and the Coen brothers' movies, or the rhythmic poetry of David Mamet's lines—people in real life don't talk like this, but sometimes realism isn't what we're after.

The film alternates between long exchanges of peppery, funny, insanely articulate speech and self-aware moments when the characters seem to realize how strangely they're talking, like when one goon gets a confused stare from his fellow henchman for his jibe, "Tell it to the one-legged man so he can bump it off down the road."

They're but two of the many colourful characters that populate Jason Smilovic's script, including Lucy Liu's bouncy coroner, Stanley Tucci's surly cop and a pair of Hasidic assassins. When it comes to this kind of kinda-goofy crime caper, you might think that Morgan Freeman and Ben Kingsley are slumming it, but their performances as a pair of quirky crime bosses illustrate the whole point of having movie stars.

Say you have a world-class assassin. Then add in the fact that he's played by Bruce Willis. Star power is never as powerful as when it's added to a great movie movie, which uses star archetypes to build hilarious characters. Here the stars are at their best, revelling in a fun twisty-turny script, smart direction, super-funky sets and a galaxy of fellow stars in on the joke—all the ingredients for a top-notch movie movie.

Not too brainy and not too dumb, *Lucky Number Slevin*'s damn clever and just right.

MOVIE | HIDDEN (CACHÉ)

Voyeurism and the cultural divide in Haneke's *Hidden*

by Deborah Daudin

PROVIDED PHOTO

Oscar winner Juliette Binoche and Daniel Auteuil star in the retitled *Caché*, a festival favourite.

Austrian writer/director Michael Haneke's new film, *Hidden (Caché)*, is yet another example of why we go to see foreign films. It's all in what isn't said and what isn't shown (in contrast, alas, with films made across the border). It makes you hang on to every word that *is* spoken and makes the silence deafening—but don't expect a neat conclusion.

To date, Haneke's films have been psychological dramas that emphasize unconventional behaviour in society (*Funny Games*, *Piano Teacher*), and with *Hidden* he sticks to his guns. His latest work delves into the world of a middle-class Parisian family who discover—when they start to receive anonymous videotapes showing footage of the front of their house—that they are being "watched."

Daniel Auteuil and Juliette Binoche star as the couple who find their comfortable lives thrown into disarray from the disturbing intrusion. Both actors give convincing performances, as a TV literary show host and publishing editor, respectively. Haneke's taut direction creates an atmosphere of tension between the couple as their comfortably secure lifestyle is threatened by an unknown stalker. The director emphasizes the realism of the situation by often filming with the same barely-moving camera that the videotapes are filmed with.

The tapes get more personal, leading Georges (Auteuil) to recall a childhood event that he had long forgotten. As Georges remembers this past act, the story begins to unfold. One more tape leads him to the home of Majid, the son of an Algerian couple who had been servants at the home where Georges grew up. His parents had planned to adopt Majid when the Algerian boy's parents died in an event orchestrated by Maurice Papon, who was brought to trial for crimes against humanity only a few years ago in Paris. In 1961, Papon was responsible for the death of 200 Algerians who had taken part in a demonstration against the French presence in Algeria.

What *Hidden* brings into focus are the social inequalities felt by North African immigrants in France today. It's not only about race relations, but about the consequences of colonialism and the advantages of being born into a peaceful nation. It is about being born white and into a culture where higher education is within reach. What strikes the viewer even more is the effect that it has on Georges, who tries to keep the matter "hidden," even to the point of lying to his wife about his past.

"What wouldn't we do to keep what we have," says Majid to Georges at their first encounter in the low-income high-rise apartment building where Majid lives—the norm for so many immigrants in France who take what they are given. In the end, somehow, it seems to highlight the differences between those who strive and achieve success and those whose cultural origins make that same achievement a near impossibility.

MOVIE | INSIDE MAN

Spike Lee turns out a thrilling heist flick

by Nick Wright

More than a few people believe that money is the root of all evil. None of the characters in Spike Lee's surprising new heist flick, *Inside Man*, could be called virtuous, but they each have to make difficult moral choices—choices that show their true colours.

Inside Man follows the perfect bank robbery, planned by enterprising thief Dalton Russell (Clive Owen), and the power struggle that ensues. It is Detective Keith Frazier's (Denzel Washington) job to unravel the lies and deception that Russell and power broker Madeline White (Jodie Foster) throw in his way. White represents the powerful bank chairman, Arthur Case (Christopher Plummer), and must protect a secret that he has kept for 60 years in a safety deposit box inside the bank. It is this secret that permeates the entire movie and ties its characters together.

Despite the film's large ensemble cast, the one-on-one dynamics between *Inside Man*'s main characters—played by Washington, Foster, Owen and Plummer—are utterly compelling, and the acting in general is top tier. The characters exploit and manipulate one another to achieve their own ends, and the results are compulsively watchable.

Frazier, the hostage negotiator, is immersed in a scandal over missing money, his career has stalled, and this heist could be his best chance for advancement. White is in the business of favours, but the secret the bank chairman wants her to protect is dirtier than most. Case sold his soul long ago, and his entire life could unravel if his terrible secret is revealed. Russell wants to get rich, but what he has to do to pull that off will push his limits.

Each of these characters has to make choices that challenge their beliefs, and the consequences are not always what they had predicted.

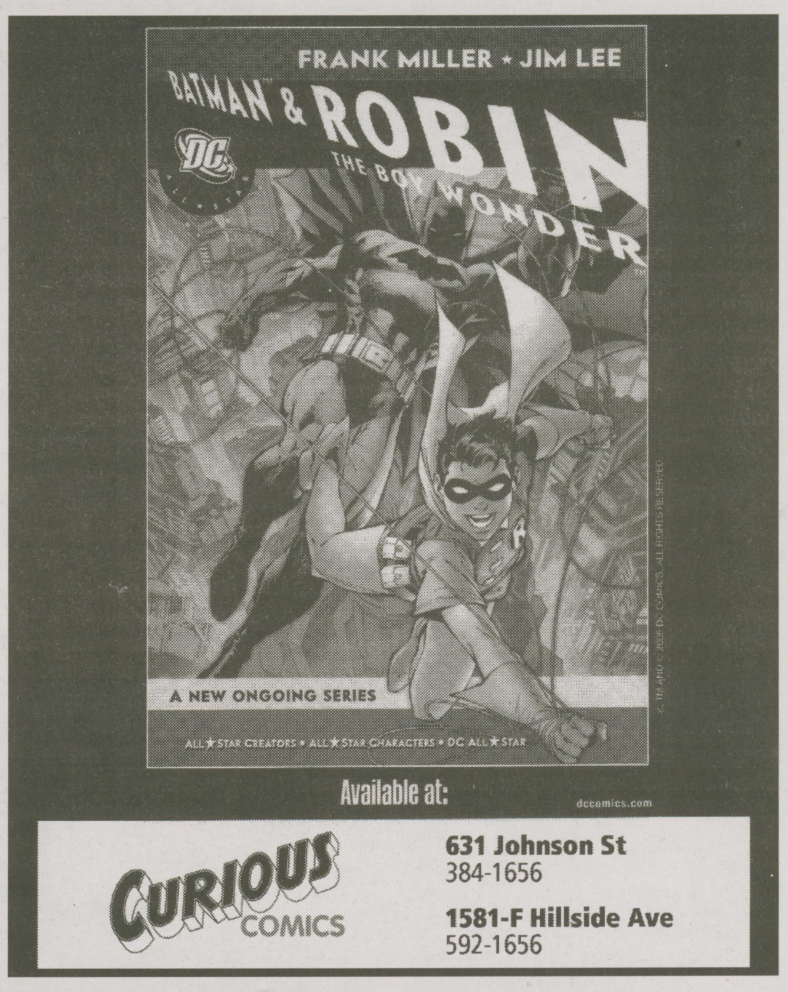
Spike Lee not only portrays the elite world of power and money as formidable, but he shows its vulnerability to the choices made by others. Russell forces all the hostages to don costumes identical to the robbers', which serves his needs for concealment and deception, but also suggests that these bank robbers are ordinary people.

None of the hostages can be ruled out as suspects, and any one of them could have done the same thing.

Inside Man is a thrilling heist movie and critique of our precarious perch on the back of the almighty dollar.

PROVIDED PHOTO

Denzel Washington and Clive Owen in *Inside Man*.



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Spring brings a wicket game of croquet

WESLEY SCOTT PHOTO

Dave Carter and his pals are into summertime backyard games like bocce and Frisbee but in February they hit the lawn outside Felicita's for a game of croquet.

The first incarnation of the game of mallets and wickets came in 13th century France, where peasants used willow knocked round objects through hoops made of willow branches.

Called "crooky" 500 years later in the British Isles, croquet gained popularity in England's colonies, particularly with socialites on the west coast of North America.

Pavement surfers hit the streets

Longboarders not only have 'flow'—they also play road hockey on four wheels, using flattened beer cans for pucks

by Nick Wright

MEGAN STEWART PHOTO

Smile at Alex Chang if you see him cruising campus on his board.

The art of bombing hills and freestyling on wheels demands equal parts skill and style.

Already known for its snowy slopes, B.C. is also becoming the destination of choice for asphalt hills. Yet, Victoria offers more of the latter, and thanks to the swells of pavement and smooth sidewalk, longboarding has a strong following.

"[I love] going fast," said UVic boarder Alex Chang. "To me it's very much a snowboarding-surfer kind of feel except I can do it cheaply, as much as possible, and as often as I want."

Unlike skateboards, longboards are built for speed, not tricks. The two are not interchangeable, and individuals each have particular reasons for choosing one over the other. But a longboarder from Seattle, Ken B., wrote at LongboardDirectory.com that the difference lies in "flow."

"When you and the board and the hill are one," he mused, "you interact with the board which in turn interacts with the road. You stay up and you look good doing it. That's flow."

To bring awareness to the newish sport, the Victoria Longboard Club, with Chang as the informal president, hosted a street party March 23 with longboard hockey and a rolling limbo competition.

There were few rules to the hockey match, and no one kept track of the score, but the club got a lot of attention from passing students and a CHTV news crew. With three players and a goalie per side, two hours of play offered as much entertainment as any NHL game. But professional hockey players don't have to worry about the rule of keeping one foot on the longboard for a pass and two for a shot.

Although few spectators understood what they were watching, the feel of the sport was clear.

"Longboarding is just fun," said boarder Matt Hoover. "[It's] hanging out with your buddies and cruising, but with hockey there's a little more competition."

The players used a fluttering beer can as a puck, and the uncooperative can prevented more than a few goals. Regardless, the Longboard Hockey League in Vancouver uses a sturdy Sapporo beer can, which Chang said can be quite practical since boarders would be unable to keep pace with a street-hockey ball.

"A beer can is light, it slows down. If we used a ball, the ball would maintain its momentum and keep going," said Chang.

However, the club does not stop with hockey. Andrew Quay describes longboarding as "downhill racing, carving, sliding, and cruising," and boarders demonstrated their skills in a limbo competition. With protective gloves, they slid their hands along the pavement while keeping their feet planted on the board and slid beneath a low-hanging bar.

Boarders soon found themselves only inches above the pavement, with the difficulty and the danger increasing as they flattened out, arms spread wide, and rolled beneath the bar. While they challenged each other to pull out smoother and tighter moves, the boarders didn't become more competitive.

PROVIDED PHOTO

Dane van Heerden in the groove March 23 for street hockey.

"We play all the longboard sports together and there is a lot more camaraderie [than competition]," said Quay.

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Doerksen expected to take on leadership role

Not many players are as grounded as CIS rookie of the year, says coach

by Matthew Gauk

While the men's basketball team will lose veteran point guard and team captain Chris Trumpy next year, it looks like a new generation of rising stars will take up the slack.

"There's a lot of encouraging things with the players we have now," said head coach Craig Beaucamp. "But at the same time it will be very much a new team with the absence of Chris Trumpy."

Trumpy, a fifth-year senior and one of the only players leaving the squad this year, led the team to a second-place finish in the Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) final 10 tournament earlier this month.

Brandon Ellis led all scorers in the quarterfinal win with 24 points against the University of Saskatchewan Huskies, and had 18 points against the Saint Francis Xavier X-Men in the semifinal. Freshman forward Jacob Doerksen led team scoring in the championship final and was named CIS rookie of the year, in part for his average of 17 points a game during the nationals.

According to Beaucamp, the six-foot-seven 230-pound Doerksen has a very strong presence on the court.

"He just has very good hands for a big man, and a very soft touch," Beaucamp said. "When you compound that with his physical strength and his ability to step out and shoot from outside the yard, it makes him a very difficult match-up."

The Vikes recruited Doerksen right out of his graduating class in Abbotsford, where he earned a nod from SportBC as the 2005 high school male athlete of the year. At 18, Doerksen is now expected to take on a leadership role, as his teammates progress and senior players leave the squad.

"He's a quiet individual by nature, and leads by example," said Beaucamp, who's been talking with Doerksen about leadership. "But he's also going to have to learn to lead in other ways as we move ahead."

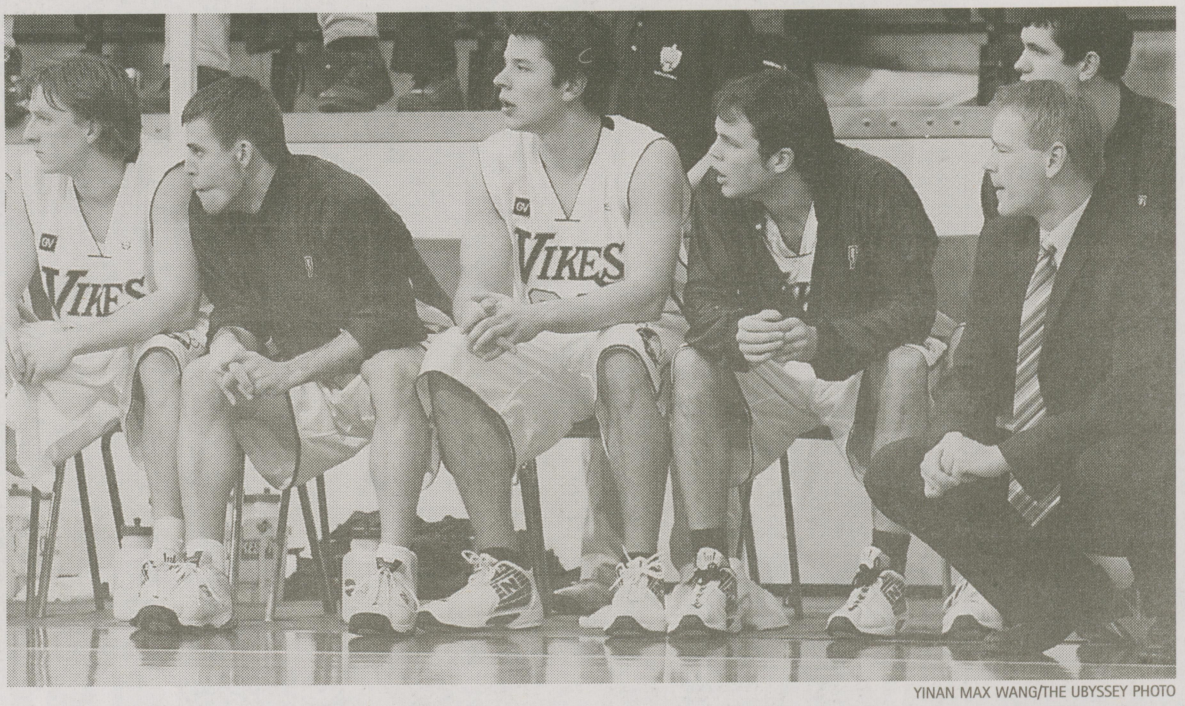
Doerksen's potential is that much higher thanks in part to his level-headed thinking and "kid-next-door" attitude.

His nonchalance will give him the opportunity to be an All-Canadian, said Beaucamp, adding that if a stranger wandered into the men's locker-room, he wouldn't be able to tell if Doerksen was a bench-warmer or a star.

"Some of his best qualities are his mannerisms and what he's made of as a person," said Beaucamp. "For a guy that has had as much success as Jake, you will find very few people with their feet as grounded as his are."

While Doerksen is a "back-to-the-basket" player, Beaucamp said he could work on this ability to shoot a pull-up and make drives on the hoop. So too could he work on his ball-handling skills and his three-pointer percentage, since these skills would make him that much more difficult to guard, said Beaucamp.

The coach believes that Doerksen showed his true colours in the nationals.



YINAN MAX WANG/THE UBYSSEY PHOTO

Vikes basketball bead coach Craig Beaucamp (at right in tie) says the men's team will have to reestablish its identity next year but he is confident the future is bright.

"It seems like when the stakes get higher, Jake's game continues to improve," said Beaucamp. "When the chips were down, he stepped up and found ways to make big plays for us time in and time out."

The fight to get back to the championships next season will start again in the fall at the Vikes' training camp.

The team will have to reestablish its identity and goals, and will realize the difficulty in making the tournament in back-to-back years said Beaucamp.

The team will nonetheless retain a strong nucleus of players that honed throughout the recent season and took part in the championship game, leading Beaucamp to believe the future of the team looks bright.

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VOLUNTEERS WANTED
Are you looking for a volunteer experience that makes a difference? BC Cancer Agency is recruiting volunteers for the summer months. If you are interested in volunteering a minimum of 100 hours in this challenging environment, please call 519-5500 ext 3747 or e-mail awest@bccancer.bc.ca

Make a world of difference! Volunteer overseas with Youth Challenge International on a hands-on development project for 5–12 weeks. Ready to go next month? This summer? Visit www.yci.org to find out more!

Gain teaching experience. Wild ARC wild animal rehabilitation centre in Victoria is seeking volunteers that can contribute to the development and delivery of education programs to local schools. Email info@wildarc.ca.

WANTED AND APPRECIATED: volunteer childcare assistants at Kiwanis House playing with children while their parents participate in life skills, parenting and pre-employment training creating a better life for themselves and their children. Contact Rachel Calder at 382-1004 or khp@youthoutreach.ca.

Seize the moment - new skills, new friends and new opportunities — Volunteer Opportunities at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary—Nature Interpreter with school groups and Nature House Receptionist. For more information call 479-0211 or email: volunteer@swanlake.bc.ca.

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ON CAMPUS

Come celebrate the launch of the Philosophy department's undergraduate journal, Sophia. The 'Pretend You Have A Real Job' Party is on April 5 at 8pm at the Victoria Events Centre. Tickets available in CLE B325. www.psuisms.ca

A shiny red ball, a golden duck, some bowling action, and wooden bats...It's CRICKET! Ladies, come learn to play with the Wicket Maidens womens cricket team. Fridays, early evenings. More info: mearac@uvic.ca

Come participate in the first annual Heart and Stroke Foundation Dodgeball tournament. April 1st, 2006 at Mount Doug Secondary School. Pick up registrations form at the McKinnon building office 112.

The C. G. Jung Society of Victoria presents a lecture by Traci O'Sullivan: "Parenthood and Mid-life," on the challenges of first-time parenthood in midlife: how we make meaning and define ourselves. April 7th, 7;30 - 9:45 p.m, Strong C-116. Members $10, Students $5, nonmembers $15.

Hey, Computer Science students: take part in the CSCU Coding Competition! Great prizes! Visit www.csc.uvic.ca/~csunion for info.

Join Stu Crawford as he shares stories of lichens and the Secwepemc people who have depended on lichen as a food source. Thursday, April 20, 2006 at 7 p.m.. UVic, MacLaurin Bldg, Rm D-116. Non member drop-in fee: $2. For more info contact 595-5820.

Are you an Arnold Schwarzenegger Fan? I am a visual artist who is asking Arnold fans to contact me with information about themselves and their relationship with Arnold. haileyisnever@shaw.ca

SERVICES/ANNOUNCEMENTS

You are invited to DreamSeed Community Action Gathering! To highlight social justice and sustainability through workshops, music, art and more... March 31st Kick off party Solstice café, 529 Pandora. April 1-2 Vic High. Register www.dreamseed.info or just come by.

Breastfeeding or Pregnant and wanting to learn more? Looking for information or help? Wanting to meet other pregnant women or breastfeeding mothers? La Leche League Saanich/Gordon Head offers telephone support and meets monthly. Our next meeting is on Wednesday April 12 at 10 a.m. The topic will be "Why Breastfeed Past Three Months", but we are happy to discuss any topic related to breastfeeding. For breastfeeding information and location details call 479-6184.

Vic-Y Volkssport has a 10K walk on Saturday Apr 1. Registration is 9:30 a.m. at Henderson Park Recreation Centre 2291 Cedar Hill X Rd. Walk begins 10:00 a.m. Everyone welcome. More info call Joan 477-1248.

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On Sunday, April 9 at 7 p.m. VIVA Boys and Girls Concert Choirs and Chorale host the Kamloops-Thompson Honour Choir at St. Aidan's United Church, 3703 St. Aidan's St., near Richmond & Cedar Hill X Rd., featuring four children's choirs. Talented young people share music of many styles, including folk and classical compositions from many cultures. Admission is by donation to support touring by participating choirs. Call 472-2655 or check www.vivachoirs.ca for information.

Island Montessori Family Carnival and with Silent Auction. Saturday, May 27, 2006 at Doncaster Elementary School -1525 Rowan St. Time 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission is free with tickets starting at twenty-five cents for prize venues and games. Fun children games, bouncy castle, BBQ, bake sale and so much more. For more information please phone 514-9391.

Do you have a project idea that would help your community? United Way is seeking proposals for its Youth Initiatives Grants. Visit www.unitedwayvictoria.bc.ca or call 385-6708 for details.

Victoria Queer Parents is a parenting group for members of the GLBT community in southern Vancouver Island who are considering becoming parents, are expecting, or are parenting babies and toddlers. The group meets regularly in Victoria. For more information, contact us by email: victoriaqueerparents@yahoo.ca.

Saanich Recreation offers fun and tasty cooking workshops for preteens, teens and adults in fully-outfitted demonstration kitchen at Colquitz Middle School. www.saanichrecreation.com or 475-5400 for details.

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OH SNAP! BALLS!

SEE OUR EXLCUSIVE PHOTO SPREAD OF CELEBRITY SAC! PAGE 7!

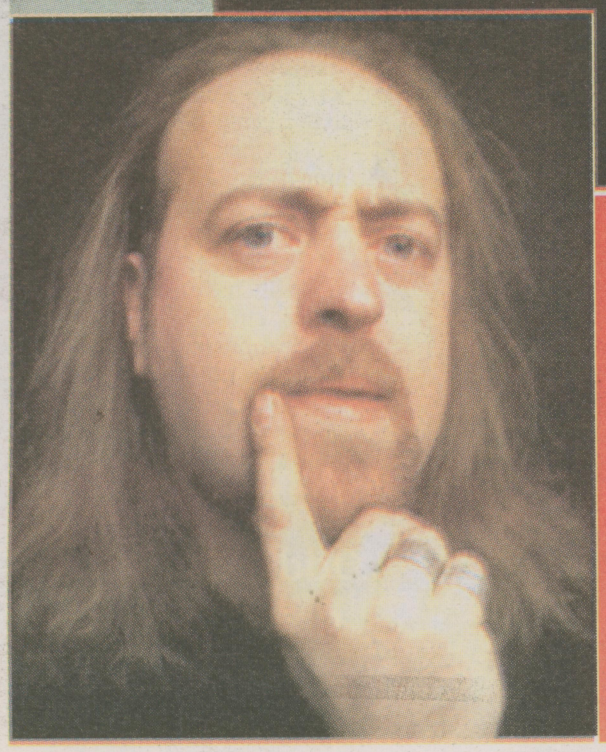
O Really?!

More Celebrity News Than You Could Possibly Need. Seriously. ~ March 30, 2006

SOME HOT BITCH
"I'm showing off my titties!"

KEIRA

"I just turned 21, and some guy came up to me and was all 'I'm 21 too. I could *totally* hit that.' It was awkward."



PAPAL DISASTER:
Pope lunges wildly at man.
***"I just kind of felt like it,"* says Pontiff.**
The bearded victim!
Full story inside.

ALSO:
Hella dolphins.

Bonus: FULL COPY OF THE *MARTLET* INSIDE!!!

WHITE-WASHING REALITY TV

TWIN SINGING SENSATION AND NEO-NAZI PRE-TEENS ONE STEP CLOSER TO FUHRER

A popular internet pastime is getting yourself banned from Prussian Blue's forum by displaying anti-racist sentiments.

The rumours are true, and fans are already in a frenzy over Reich International's reality TV show, *The Concentration Life*. The white supremacist pop duo Prussian Blue will live inside a sound-stage recreation of the Second World War-era Auschwitz concentration camp.

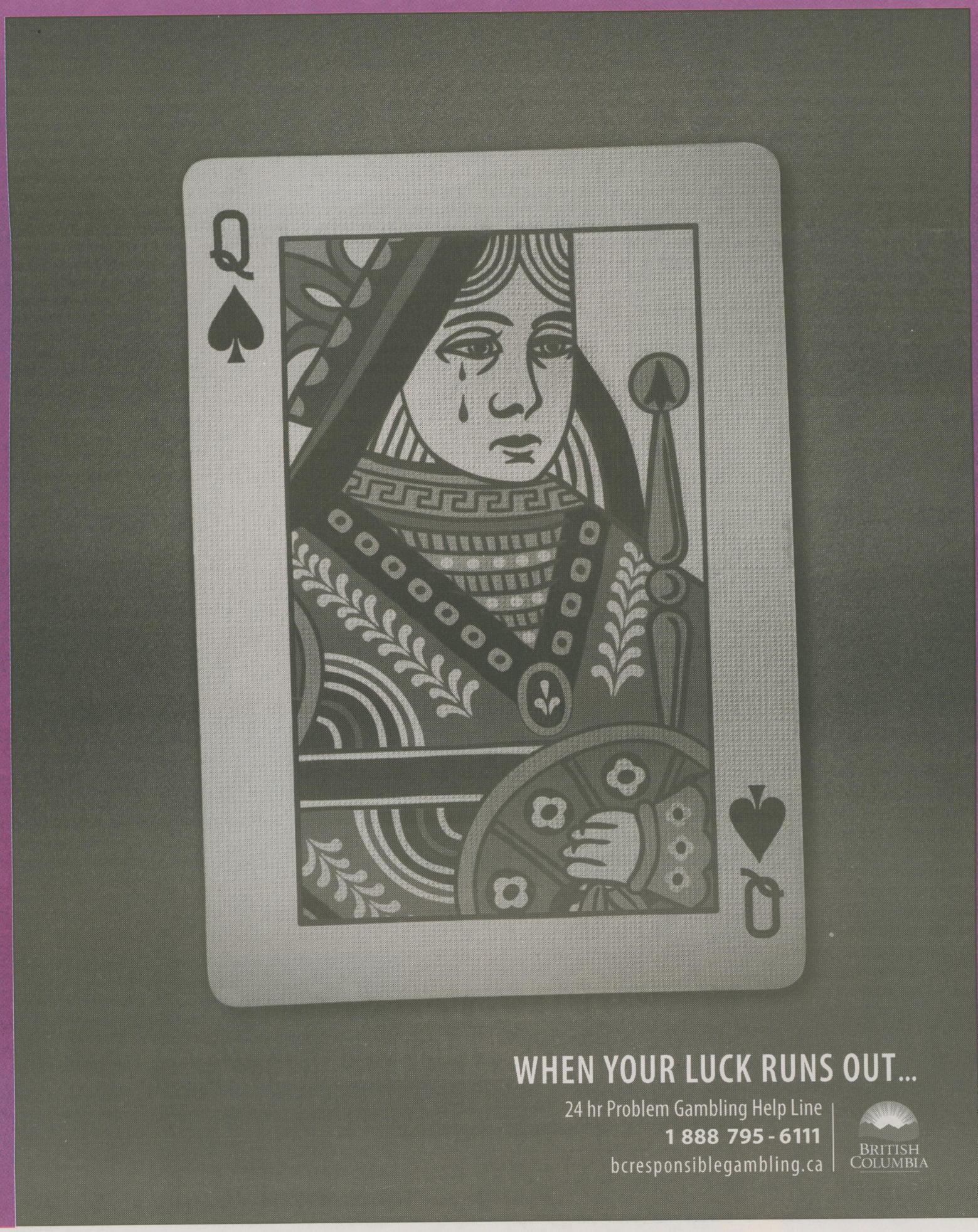
"Hitler was magic," said 13-year-old Lamb Gaede as she sat on a plush rose ottoman in her California home. "A magic angel. A special friend we never knew but who visits us in our dreams and tells us songs to write and why our songs will make the world better to live in."

Her twin sister, Lynx, also sounded in on the Fuehrer's greatness. "Oh, I just think white people—and please capitalize white people—need to know how beautiful and heavenly they are," she mumbled softly, pulling at the stiff collar of her brown shirt. "We're doing *The Concentration Life* to show that Herr Hitler was just running a hotel for non-gentiles. Nobody died there, and we're going to re-create the daily life of the chambermaids who would have worked there. And we get to wear the cutest little outfits!"

"The most important social issue facing the white people today is not having enough white babies being born and not having good-quality white people like us being born. So, we're so happy that we're the future because we have a responsibility to ensure the pure-blooded don't lose sight of what really matters," continued Lamb, who said she is named after "the Lord's pet" because her mother had a sense her daughters could be molded into the face and voice of the Aryan movement.

The twins are working on a new album, *Right to White*, and will touch on the issue of "young white girls with good eugenics not having babies."

Note: Prussian Blue are a real *Aryan pop group who* really *said some of that stuff.*



HARRIED POTTER

ROWLING AND POTTER SQUARE OFF OVER BOOK ROYALTIES

Best-selling fantasy author Joanne Kathleen Rowling and Harry Potter appeared in court last Tuesday.

Rowling and Potter filed complaints against each other early last year. Potter filed first, accusing Rowling of "keeping all the money for herself." Records indicate that Rowling has indeed kept her entire $1,000,000,000, while Potter has yet to receive a cent from book sales.

"It's just not fair," said Potter. "She has published a whole chapter of my life, without my permission, and she won't even give me a piece of the pie."

Potter requested last March that Rowling buy him "something nice," but Rowling admits she refused. "Why should I give Harry anything?" asked the author. "I went to all the trouble of writing the books. He wasn't there to help with the work, why should he be rewarded? Fuck Harry Potter!"

Shortly after Rowling refused, Potter officially filed suit, demanding $99,999,990. When the media predicted the lawsuit would flop, Potter publicly threatened Rowling, saying he would turn her into an elastic band if she did not agree to give him the money. "She knows I can do it, too—she's read the books," said Potter.

Rowling then charged Potter for threatening her with magic. While it is illegal to make threats, the police had no legislation against magic. As a solution, police chief Robby Tolden added a new law to the law books, writing in permanent marker in case a similar situation came up in the future. "I just want to make sure that people don't get hurt," said Tolden. "As for the name of the new law, I'm calling it the Tolden Rule."

Judge Gregory Hack is scheduled to make a decision for both cases early next week. "I really wasn't comfortable charging Potter," said Hack. "I knew that I could be magically transformed if I offended him. In light of the Tolden Rule, I feel ready to make an unbiased ruling."

If Potter is found guilty, he will have both his hands cut off. "I don't mind so much if it comes to that," said Potter. "It'll all have been worth it to have met such a famous bestselling author."

Oddly coloured gradients are the shit!

HARPER'S BABY SURPRISE

AND HIS AWKWARD PHONE CALL TO THE WHITE HOUSE

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's eating habits have been under fire over the past few weeks, as photos of him drinking soda and sporting a belly bulge have been splashed across the front pages of every major newspaper across the country.

But insiders say Harper's weight gain is nothing he should be ashamed of—he just doesn't know how to break it to the public that he's eating for two!

"I'm nervous and excited at the same time," Harper reportedly squealed to one Conservative party insider as they dined at one of the Prime Minister's favourite Ottawa eateries. "How am I going to lead this country into its glorious conservative dawn if I'm on maternity leave?"

But Harper's worries are going to multiply once his wife finds out that his expanding waistline is actually a baby-bump. Friends of the couple say Laureen Harper has no idea her husband is pregnant, and given that their two children, Rachel and Ben, were conceived artificially, it looks like Stephen has some explaining to do. It was just last year, after all, that Harper spoke out about the pair's decision never to conceive naturally in a press conference, stating simply, "sex is icky."

"Laureen is going to be crushed when she finds out Stephen has betrayed her," said Toronto-based relationship psychologist Dr. Yuan Dickout. "Only time will tell if she has the same strength Hillary Clinton had to stick the marriage out." Now, the question on the minds of everyone in the Prime Minister's inner circle is, "Who's the daddy?"

Only Harper and his doctor know the answer to that for sure. But after obtaining leaked copies of the baby's sonogram from a doctor's exam Harper went for March 21, forensic gynecologist Dr. Lance Blowhard says he has an idea.

"The baby's sloping forehead and ape-like facial features point to a paternal link with a certain U.S. president," the doctor hinted in a recent interview with *O Really?!* "Unfortunately, only a tissue or blood sample from the baby can tell us who the father is with any certainty."

Blowhard estimated the fetus was about six weeks old at the time of the sonogram.

Government records of Harper's expenditures over the past two months since he has become Prime Minister indicate that he *was* indeed visiting the current U.S. President on Feb. 14 for Valentines Day—exactly six weeks before the sonogram was taken. The two were hidden from public view at all times during the visit by a circular entourage of security guards, but one of the guards, who wished to remain anonymous, said on the record that the pair seemed "unusually close."

The guard recalled seeing the two leaders taking long walks on the White House lawn together, which he thought was strange because "the White House lawn isn't that big, so they just kept walking in circles for hours." At one point, he even saw them kissing and canoodling shamelessly in the Oval Office, before George W. Bush shooed all the guards out and eagerly kicked the door shut.

Bush's secretary was the only one to enter the Oval Office again for the rest of the day, according to insider reports, bringing in only Bush's favourite Barry White tapes and a freshly oiled saddle.

"I thought they would take a break from their meeting to eat at some point, but I didn't hear a peep from my boss until the next morning," Bush's personal secretary gossiped to the guard a few days later. "They must have been very, very busy."

On Feb. 15, Harper boarded a plane back to Ottawa, and his wife and children greeted him at the airport. Dickout suspects that all of his haranguing in the media since then over restricting gay marriage rights has just been him trying to cover up the scandal, or perhaps attempting to purify himself of his "sins."

"These right-wing Christian men can experience feelings of terrible guilt if they ever develop feelings for another male," she said. "I'm concerned for the Prime Minister, that he might be depriving himself of 'forbidden love'—and, what's worse, there's a child in the middle of it. I'll be surprised if he doesn't impeach himself for this when the news breaks to the public."

Here's hoping.

Preggo PM Stephen Harper, sporting a kicky cowboy boot and skirt ensemble, bares his belly for the cameras during a recent beachfront walk.

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A JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS

DOCTOR COPPERPOT AND THE DARK MATTER

Dark matter is a magnificently sinister name for so hypothetical a construct; it inspires curiosity and awe even in those for whom astrophysics begins and ends at spotting the Big Dipper. The theory itself—that the vacuum of space is filled with an impossibly exotic, undetectable type of matter—is also seductive to astrophysicists who cling to Newton's theories of motion.

Planets cluster into solar systems, solar systems into galaxies, and galaxies swirl and dance around each other like fat ballet dancers. What keeps them spinning? Classic Newtonian models cease to function at the galactic scale unless a new variable is introduced—dark matter. The mass of dark matter, plugged into traditional equations of motion, allows equations to accurately model the actual motion of planets. Thus, dark matter has been generally accepted in the astrophysics community as a real and essential component of the mysterious cosmos.

Frank Copperpot and Steven Tung, of the University of Victoria department of astrophysics, disagree. In their new paper, "Galactic Rotation Without Dark Matter," Copperpot and Tung posit a relativistic model for galactic motion that removes the need for exotic dark matter.

Reviews of Copperpot's theories are not entirely positive. "I am [dismayed] that 'Dr.' Copperpot wrote that," says Francois Descloches, former protégé and current UC Berkeley Professor Emeritus. "He was a [...] teacher of mine and I respect[ed] him quite a bit."

Francois throws the paper out the window in disgust and storms out of the bathroom.

Anxious to hear Copperpot's response to his critics, I meet him in a dingy hotel room near the Gorge; he answers the door in a tank top and flip flops, distended gut stretched over his genitals in some pathetic approximation of dignity. His breath smells of rum and whores, and when he beckons me in, his words slur from his herpetic lips like swamp water sloshing into a bootprint.

A technical artist's depiction of dark matter and "stuff what's real."

The room's sole chair is stacked high with paper; the desk is littered with pizza boxes and scorched aluminium foil. Copperpot offers me a seat on the bed, near a heaving, covered-over mass he never introduces; a shock of moist, stringy blonde hair trickles out from under the blanket, and a hand dangles, bony and pale, off the edge of the bed. I choose to stand, and Copperpot slumps against the wall.

"Dark matter," he says, "is shit." He pulls a half-smoked cigarette butt from the ashtray and relights it. "Fuck it."

The window is open and I can hear an ambulance in the distance. Copperpot notices my distraction. "Here's the thing about dark matter," he continues, pushing himself off the wall. "It's all over this math shit, I can't see it, you can't see it, where the fuck IS-" and he stops to cough, wheezing, dry heaves, nearly toppling over but for his free hand propping him up against the nightstand, hunched over and shivering, knocking the ashtray onto the stained brown rug. The reading lamp convulses and tumbles onto the bed as Copperpot reaches for a crumpled wad of tissues to cover his mouth. The hacking continues for half a minute; I begin to pray that the sirens in the distance are coming for him. But when he stops, he resumes as if nothing happened. "Where the fuck IS it?" he levels, his voice roughened but still firm. "Jesus, Birkeland, what the CHRIST!"

Copperpot is standing upright now, eyes alight. Then he's marching towards the desk, where he shoves aside a pizza box and pulls a sideways bottle of Lamb's rum into his mouth. He sucks hungrily at the remaining booze, turns with a fierce growl and throws the bottle at the mass on the bed. It impacts with a sallow thunk. "GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE, YOU WHORE!" he shrieks, as the lump springs to life, kicking at her cocoon of blankets. "GET THE FUCK OUT AND NEVER COME BACK. STEAL MY DRINK IS WHAT YOU DON'T DO!!!!!!"

He storms over and pulls the struggling mummy from the bed, tossing her sack-like form out the door, and she stumbles and falls towards the stairs, yelping. He slams the door shut before she hits the ground, and he falls against it, breathing heavily, burying his face in the crook of his naked arm. I can barely hear his sobbing over the squeals from his straining lungs. I am watching a man dissolve into nothing, every bit of him stretching into the dimmest corners of this sick square hollow. There is nothing left of him, and when he finally speaks again it is like the sound of the cosmos collapsing, a vague rumble of primordial angst groping desperately for an ear through the infinite hollows of its own corpus.

Copperpot is what I came here to see; his words are irrelevant. He is the disproof of his own theory: he is the dark, unknowable nothingness that swirls around us, that haunts our equations. He must exist; he must exist. And I know that dark matter exists because I have known the man who denies it.

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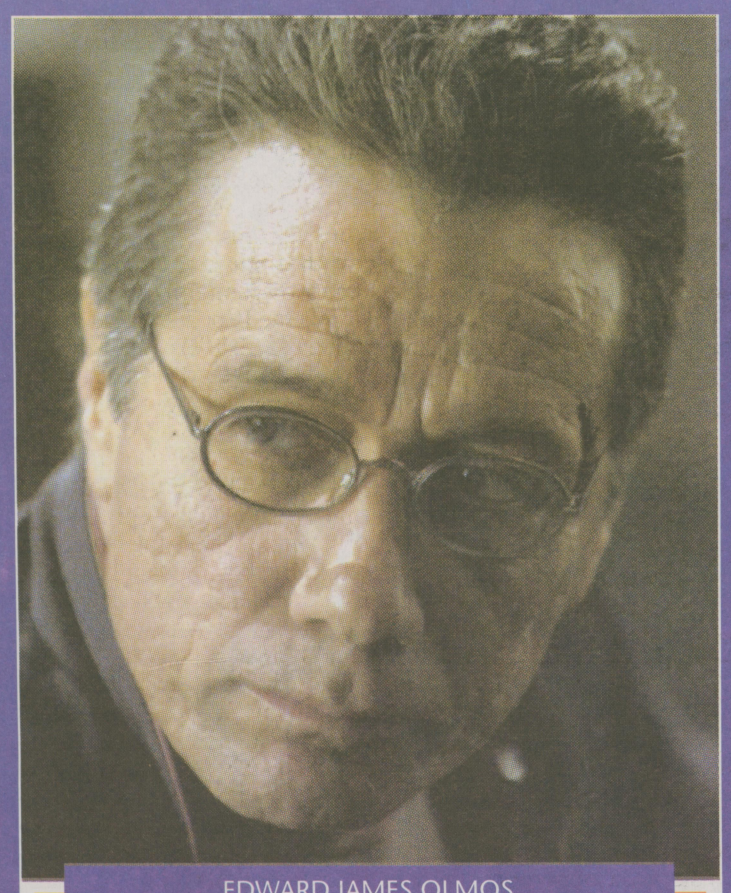
O Really?! Celeb Update!



EDWARD JAMES OLMOS

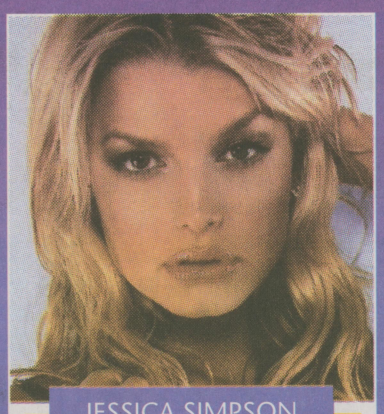
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA ACTOR MAKES ORGAN-RELATED GAFF

It was an embarrassing evening for Edward James Olmos at a recent fundraising gala for The Foundation for Cattle Prevention, when the 59-year-old actor's spleen lept from his body and attacked other party-goers.

"It was incredibly awkward," said Olmos after the fact. "I've never had an internal organ run off like that before. Well, just that one time, but it hardly counts."

Everyone was back under control in moments, and Olmos and his spleen are back on good terms. In the end, Olmos' spleen itself donated $300 to the cause.

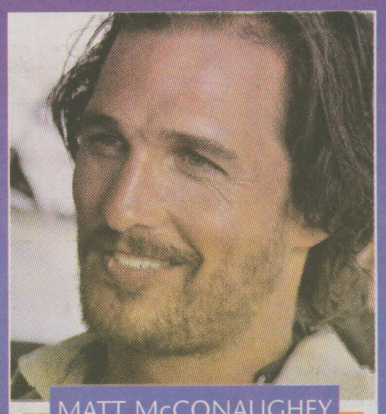
The event raised over $321 for the Prevention of Cattle. Olmos and his spleen are in counselling.



JESSICA SIMPSON

STARLET STARTS (NEW) REALITY SHOW

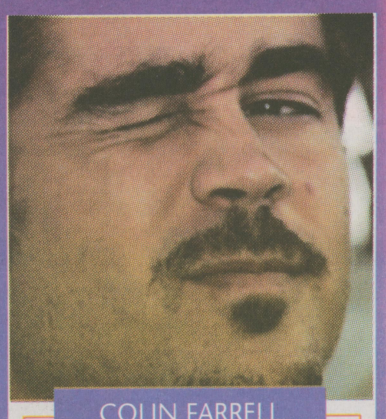
Pop sensation Jessica Simpson recently announced she has begun filming a new show called "The Divorcées." Reports say she has been filming herself manically sabotaging her soon-to-be ex-husband Nick Lachey. In the first episode she puts sugar in his gas tank and defecates on his front porch. "Stay tuned for more antics," she told the press.



MATT McCONAUGHEY

CRAZY JACKASS STILL A CRAZY JACKASS

Crazy jackass McConaughey was discovered passed out and naked in a puddle of his own fluids at a motel near Las Vegas last week. After informing police that he was "too sexy for his shirt," he was referred to the psychiatric ward at a Vegas hospital, where mental health professionals sedated him and stapled a shirt to his body "for the public good."



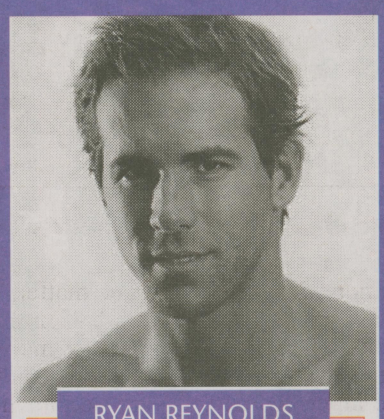
COLIN FARRELL

FARRELL COMPENSATES WITH HUGE TATTOO

The Hollywood bad-boy is unlikely to get cast in anything now that he's got a D-cup sized tattoo of a woman's breasts on his neck.

Farrell commented to an *O Really?!* reporter, "What? I like tits."

The tattoo shop where the ink was done commented that Farrell is an idiot, and that they were pleased to take his money.

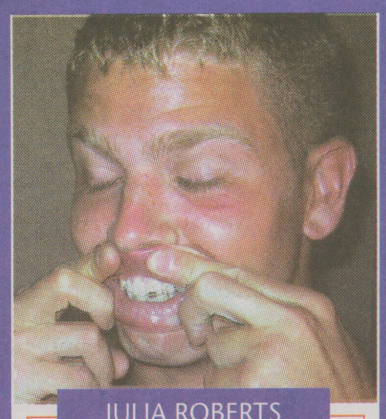


RYAN REYNOLDS

TOTALLY BUFF, STILL PHALLIC

Canada's favourite B-list star Ryan Reynolds made himself an official nob this week by taking on the role of spokesman for the Dudes Of Natural Girth Society (DONGS).

Reynolds beefed up for the summer blockbuster, *Cut Like Judas*, and proves his bod is nothing if not hard. "I'm a proud member," he said, "of DONGS."

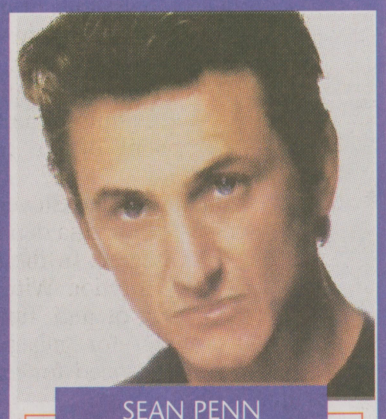


JULIA ROBERTS

METHOD IN THE MUD FOR PIGGY FLICK

Julia Roberts, recently cast as Charlotte in the upcoming feature *Charlotte's Web*, moved into a secluded farmhouse to learn to care for a pig in preparation for the role.

The owner of the farm commented that she's really taken to the family's pet pig and the way she rolls around the sty with him is both endearing and disturbing.

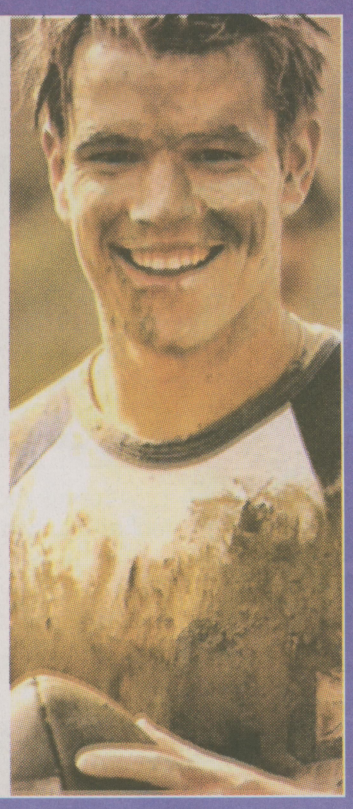


SEAN PENN

MEDICAL REASON FOR LACK OF HUMOUR

Sean Penn is resting a little easier today, after a third round of testing confirmed that his complete lack of any sense of humour is a hereditary medical condition. "I was very contented at hearing the news," said Penn, with his usual dry delivery.

Treatments will begin soon, and Penn says he hopes to "get jokes" within the year.



MATT DAMON

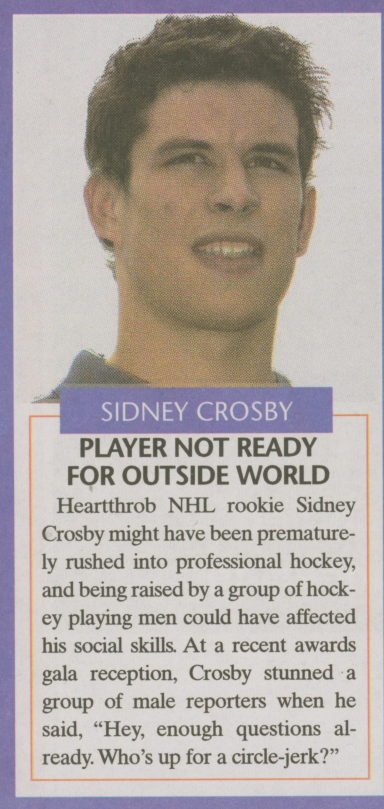
AMERICAN HUNK OPENS SCREENWRITING SCHOOL

The *Good Will Hunting* co-writer opened the first of what he's named the "It's Not Your Fault" School of Screenwriting.

At the school, based in a large complex in Irvine, Calif., young writers will learn how to pair up with less talented, fat-faced actors to write cliche-ridden but ultimately moving scripts about improbable geniuses who just happen to be sweet, humble and boy-next-door attractive.

The school teaches the Damon/Affleck arc of one-off success followed by a string of mediocre acting gigs, high-profile relationships, and shitty haircuts. Damon hopes to open branches of the school in New York, London, and Baaawwwston.

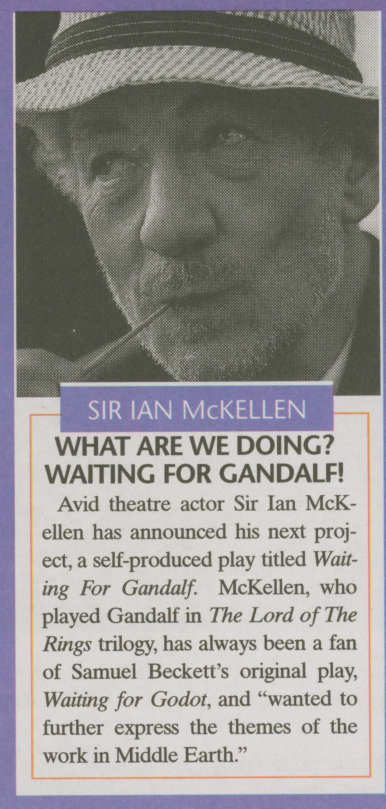
Damon quipped, "Maaaatt Daaaamon."



SIDNEY CROSBY

PLAYER NOT READY FOR OUTSIDE WORLD

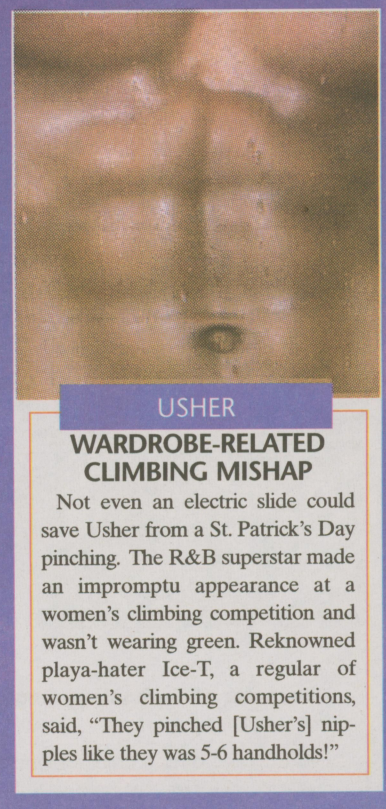
Heartthrob NHL rookie Sidney Crosby might have been prematurely rushed into professional hockey, and being raised by a group of hockey playing men could have affected his social skills. At a recent awards gala reception, Crosby stunned a group of male reporters when he said, "Hey, enough questions already. Who's up for a circle-jerk?"



SIR IAN McKELLEN

WHAT ARE WE DOING? WAITING FOR GANDALF!

Avid theatre actor Sir Ian McKellen has announced his next project, a self-produced play titled *Waiting For Gandalf*. McKellen, who played Gandalf in *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy, has always been a fan of Samuel Beckett's original play, *Waiting for Godot*, and "wanted to further express the themes of the work in Middle Earth."



USHER

WARDROBE-RELATED CLIMBING MISHAP

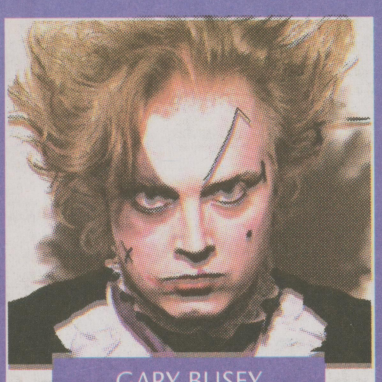
Not even an electric slide could save Usher from a St. Patrick's Day pinching. The R&B superstar made an impromptu appearance at a women's climbing competition and wasn't wearing green. Reknowned playa-hater Ice-T, a regular of women's climbing competitions, said, "They pinched [Usher's] nipples like they was 5-6 handholds!"

DAKOTA FANNING

CHILD ACTRESS HOOKS UP WITH TRUMP

Hollywood's hottest child actress has been spotted on the arm of billionaire businessman Donald Trump. The Donald makes no bones about his penchant for young ladies and has publicly announced his adoration of Fanning. "She's a remarkable woman who understands what I do and treats me with respect."

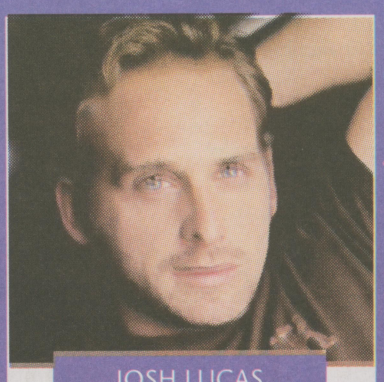
Twelve-year-old Fanning was unavailable for comment.



GARY BUSEY

ACTOR EATS OWN HEAD

The Firm actor Busey announced his latest project—a plan to slowly and methodically eat his own head. Critics expect the cranial cannibalization to be Busey's best work.



JOSH LUCAS

STEALTH STAR BE TRIPPIN'

On a New York street corner, Lucas tumbled over a curb, breaking his nose, jaw, clavicle, liver, French fries, hairline, stubble, toothpaste and talent. We wish him a quick recovery.

SNOUT SPOUT

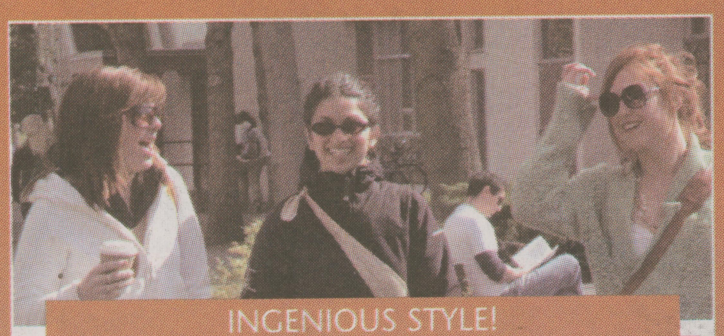
HUGE ROBOT ELEPHANT

Formerly an Etherian peasant, he was captured by Hordak and subjected to fiendish experiments which turned him into the elephantine cyborg he is today.

O Really?! Fashion Report!

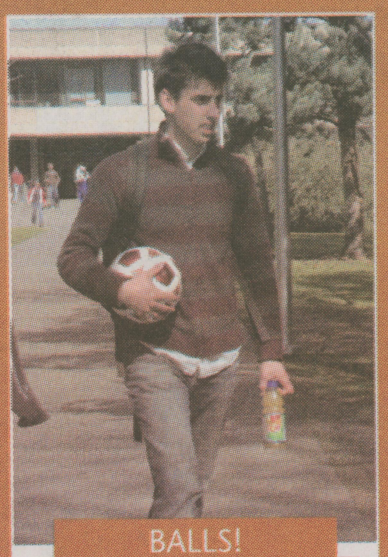
RIDES!

Chicks dig a sweet ride, and there's no ride sweeter than a low-ride, lawn mower-powered scooter . . . thing. It's fast, easy, and you totally won't look like a dork. Um . . . roll out?



INGENIOUS STYLE!

Want to stand out? Wearing large glasses is a surefire way to do it! Also a great way to hide black eyes you get from walking into things you can't see due to your giant glasses.

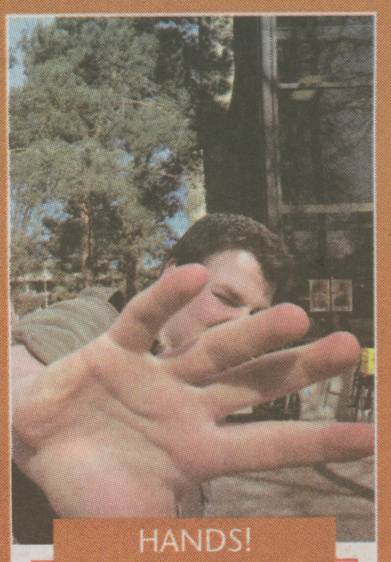


BALLS!

That's right, guys, it's time to go balls out. Carrying around the ball from your sport of choice says, "Yeah bitch, you bring that weak game. I'ma serve yo ass!"

SOCKS!

You may have heard that it's a faux pas to wear socks with sandals. Well, we here at *O Really?!* never took French, so we don't even know what that means.

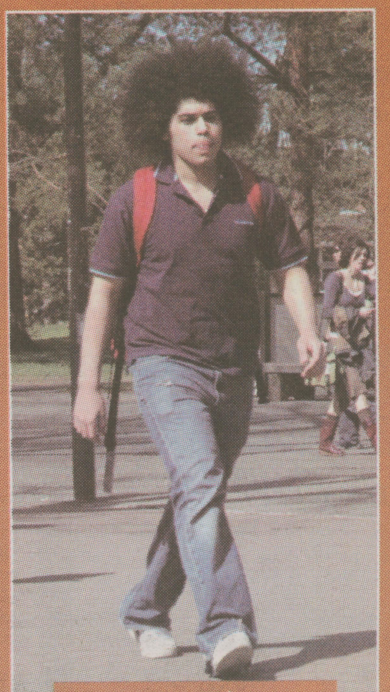


HANDS!

When the face don't want to hear it, what do you do? Talk to the hand! Other uses include flashing gang signs, throwing the bird and holding things.

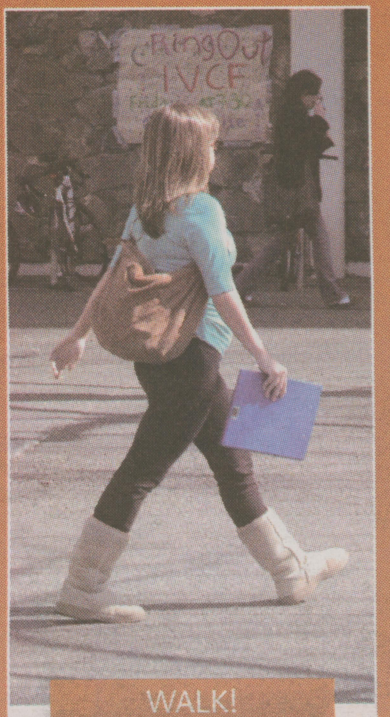
ACCESSORIES!

Nothing goes better with a hot pair of black capris than an apple. Pomegranates and nectarines are a no-no this season, so stick to apples and berries.



HAIR!

An afro-style hairdo is an ideal replacement for a backpack. You can store all kinds of things up there: books, school supplies, lunch, even a body!



WALK!

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PREPARE YOURSELF FOR

HUNKY BALLS!

THE MOST GLAMOUROUS GONADS, ON DISPLAY IN AN *O REALLY?!* PHOTO EXCLUSIVE!

We've scoped out the most spectacular bods, the tightest abs, the amplest bosoms. This week, *O Really?!* brings you a definitive countdown of Hollywood's hottest scrotal occupants.

DAVID BECKHAM

Here we see super-hunky David Beckham's stone-solid duo snugged up in a pair of CK briefs and D&G denim. Take a look at that mouth-watering bulge! If Mr. Posh Spice was a porn star, his screen name would be Alec Ballswin. If only all British men had rocks like these. (We're looking at you, Mr. Blair!)

PRINCE CHARLES

Hotter than the sun, and with twice as much ear hair, Prince Charles gives up the goods in a pair of pleated grey slacks from Mark's Work Wearhouse. Is that the faint outline of a nut we see through Chaz's layered brief/boxer combination? It might be a marble or an honest-to-goodness micro-phallus, but with a pic that man-tastic, we're happy just to speculate.

CHRIS MARTIN

Coldplay crooner Chris Martin gave beachgoers a show when he doffed his skivvies on the shoreline and dunked a duo of swollen clackers into the ocean. The famous fellow's fellows seem to have been punched and bludgeoned hundreds of times, a likely explanation for Martin's note-perfect adolescent-girl voice. Gwynnie Paltrow's pleasure-friend had better lay off the self-flagellation or the celeb pair might not have enough seed to grow another Apple.

GEORGE CLOONEY

As actor/writer/director George Clooney takes a sporting leap off his personal yacht, a keen snapper nabs a pic of the superstar's fundamentally upsetting trio of sperm factories. That's right—the multi-talented lothario has a three-prong plug-in, a fistful of trail mix, a triple-barreled riotbuster. (That means he has three balls, which is one more than the usual two.)

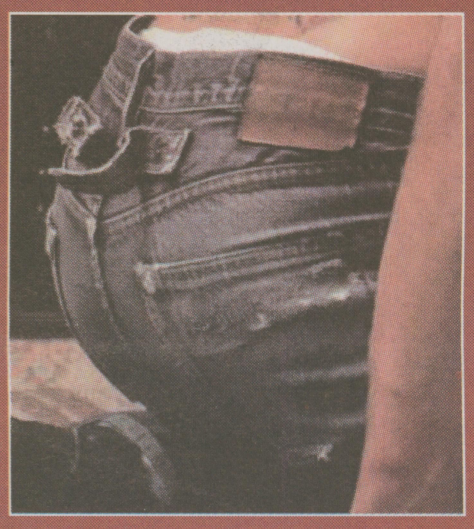
MICKEY ROURKE

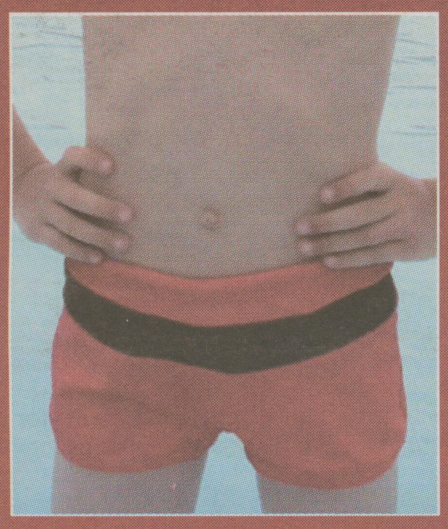
Preposterously deformed Sin City star Mickey Rourke flashes a fleet of paparazzi from the backseat of a luxury SUV. Spotted between the thesp's thighs—an extra-lean turkey sausage flanked by a single human eye (brown) and a dense cluster of Lucky Charms marshmallows. This celeb's unsettling twig and two berries sent a pack of nauseous snappers to the ER.

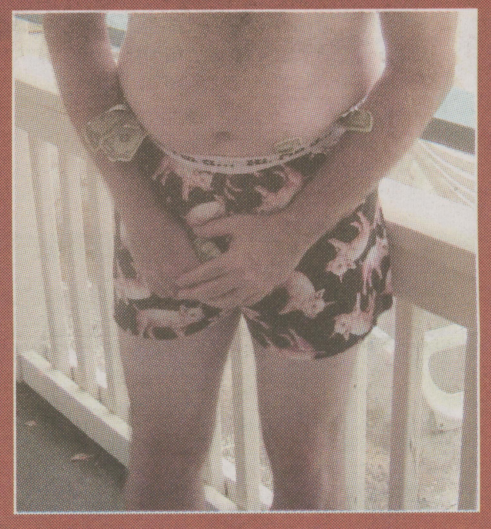
GUY RITCHIE

Madonna's filmmaker hubbie, Guy Ritchie, shows off his scrumptious twins in a pair of red swim trunks. With jewels like those, Ritchie won't have a hard time finding "Snatch" for his "Smoking Barrel" while Madge is stowed away in her underground vampire lair during daylight hours.

Got blue balls for more celebrity sac? Visit our online database!

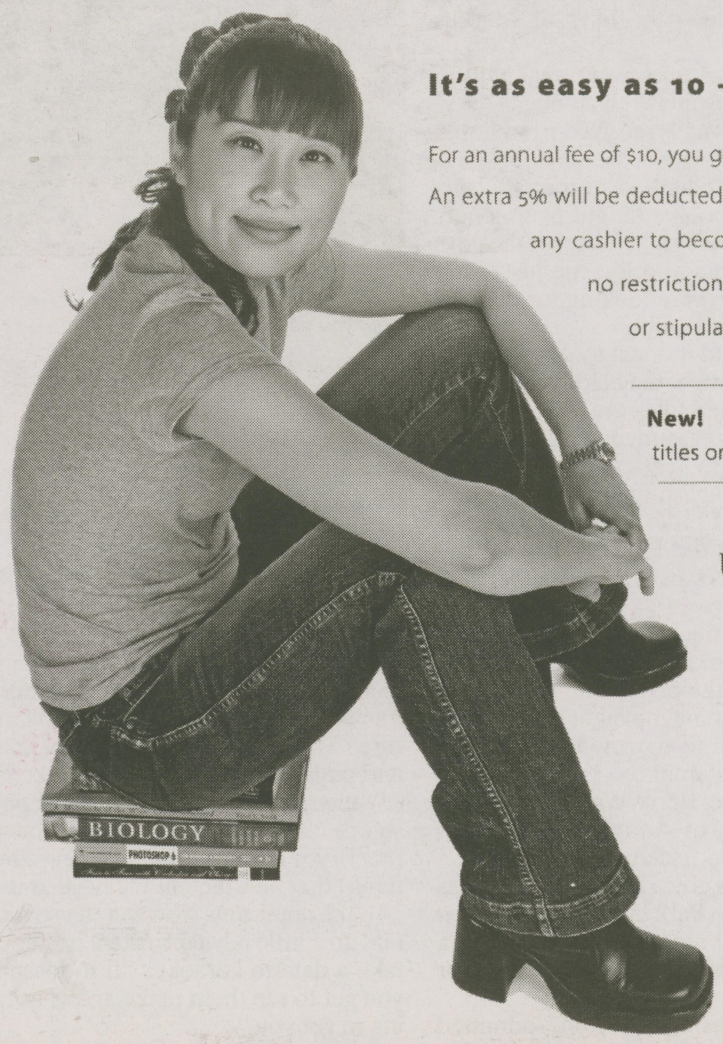






(Balls clockwise from top right): Mickey Rourke, George Clooney, Chris Martin, HRH Prince Charles, Guy Ritchie and David Beckham.

simplicity { the card for the constant reader }



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HOLMES ALONE!

KATIE HOLMES REVEALS ALL ABOUT HER PAID-AND-PLAYED ROMANCE WITH TOM CRUISE

With a baby on the way, a still-fresh romance and a high-profile movie (*MI:3*) on the horizon, Tom Cruise is on top of the world, as usual.

But there's a storm brewing in Hollywood. Katie Holmes recently met with an *O Really?!* reporter to spill the beans about her so-called love affair with Cruise. She's ditching the miniature macho man, and we've got the exclusive interview.

Katie, why are you leaving Tom? Things seem to be going so well.
Actually, there are a few different reasons. The first is that he's gay, so we don't really get along very well in bed. He's got this fishing buddy who drops by every few weeks. I know it's Vin Diesel, but he's always wearing sunglasses and a press-on mustache.

The two of them take off in Vin's truck and spend a few days away from home, but I don't think they're fishing. I think they're having hot sex and reminiscing about that summer they herded sheep up on Brokeback.

But Tom's one of the biggest movie stars in the world. Can't you give the guy a break?
There are other things that get on my nerves. Scientology is pretty strange, and I've been uncomfortable taking part in their ceremonies. It's this whole science-fiction thing where they take off their clothes, put on tinfoil hats and have "sword fights." But that's just for the guys. The girls hook up special Scientology aura-reading machines to their nipples and watch videos of L. Ron Hubbard drinking milk and falling out of trees. Apparently he loved falling out of trees. There are dozens of tapes, and those are just the leaf-bearing trees.

How did you get into this mess?
It is a mess, isn't it? It all started when Steven Spielberg sent me a fruit basket and a nice card that asked me to meet him at an L.A. restaurant to discuss a new film. When I got out of the cab, the restaurant was an RV parked on the side of the highway, and Tom Cruise was standing outside eating a lamb taco. Scientologists are only allowed to eat lamb tacos, Mentos, and Oreo Blizzards. I went into the RV and Spielberg offered me $50 million and a guaranteed part in *Batman Begins* if I'd fake a romance with Tom and have his baby.

Like any young actress, I decided to make the sacrifice, but things went downhill. I'm happy to be moving on, and I'll be auctioning off my baby on eBay with all proceeds going to the Panda Pride foundation, an organization that campaigns for the preservation and procreation of gay pandas.

What's next for you? Any new men in your life?
[Laughs] No new men. I've taken to frequent, reckless masturbation, which seems to be all I can handle these days. The only man in my life is my dad, who's been so supportive.

What do you think of the rumours about you and him?
About me and who? Me and my dad? I didn't know there were rumours.

If he asked you out on date, what would you say?
[Long pause] I'm sorry, I don't think I understand. Sometimes I take my dad to movie premieres and awards shows. He's my good date.

Do you fancy him?
Wow, that's a new one. Do I fancy my dad. . . . I'd have to say yeah, I love him to death.

What do you look for in a bloke?
I like a guy with a sense of humour, an interest in Civil War re-enactment, and a burning hatred of lamb tacos.

If you were on a desert island, which bloke would you like to have with you—your dad or Batman?
I'd have to say my dad, since Batman isn't real and probably wouldn't like being on a desert island anyway. Batman's got a nice body and some fun toys, but my dad's my dad.

I guess if I wanted to get *off* the island, I'd probably bring Batman along, since he's got the Batboat and the Batsubmarine and the Batjet and all that.

Is your dad Batman?
My dad's a lawyer, and I'm pretty sure Batman isn't real.

Shut up! Shut up! He *is* real. He lives in my head with Elton John and the cast of Coronation Street! Go snog a biscuit, Holmes. Just right bugger off!
OK, then. Thanks for your time.

WHO IS ANDY HILL?

HE'S JUST THIS GUY, YOU KNOW?

The quest for true love is bound to have its twists and turns, its chance meetings and strange encounters—but when the search is failing, a modern-day romantic has to get innovative.

Many lovelorn wanderers log on to find true love—and as a Google search would show, there are a slew of matchmaking offerings—but these weren't good enough for Andy Hill.

When the pickings got slim, Andy typed up a personal ad to staple up alongside the myriad of "For Sale" signs and pub-crawl posters that litter UVic's bulletin boards. Hill's ad wanted a dark-haired or bald life partner, a little on the short side—the likes of Markus Naslund need not apply.

Though Hill admits this is an unconventional path to partnership, the striking brunette has been overwhelmed at the number of e-mails received from hopeful applicants.

The first-year geography student was especially surprised at the amount of responses he got from lonely guys also in their first year at UVic. "Several of the guys who responded were first years who, like me, just didn't know how to find what they were looking for, so they jumped at my ad," commented Hill.

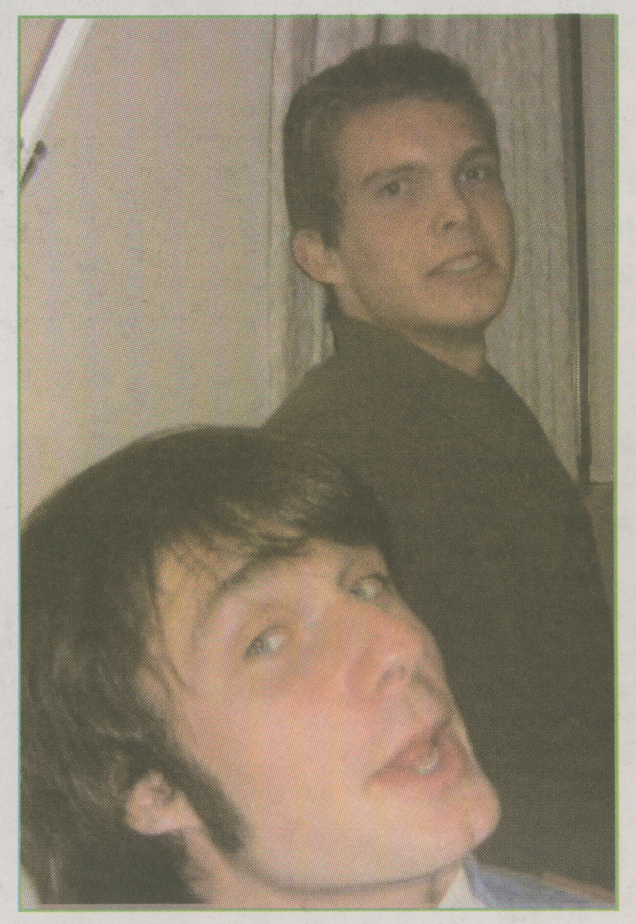
"One of the guys I narrowed it down to, Matt Davidson, even shaved his head to meet the bald specification I had on the poster," chuckled Hill.

Davidson, a first-year sciences student at UVic, didn't seem to take Hill's rejection to heart, as he was recently spotted canoodling with English-major Gowan Gillis over lunch at the University Centre. Several hours later, Andy saw them entering the Hugh Stephens residence building, though Gillis's pals insist the two are just friends.

To weed out the good from the bad and the ugly, Hill's pal Brian Albaum helped him organize a *Bachelor*-esque group date with Hill as the prize. The crew of "finalists" went bar-hopping, ending the night at Sopranos where Andy was finally able to narrow it down after each of the young men sang karaoke.

Hill said that his first choice, Barry Warren, won him over with a sultry rendition of Aerosmith's "Angel." "He sang so passionately and seemed so genuine; I thought I just had to give this guy a shot." The pair has been enjoying picnics in Gyro Park and snuggling up in Warren's dorm with stacks of rentals, but realize they'll have to cut down the couple-time soon to prepare for their final exams.

"We have to put the brakes on for a bit," admitted Hill, "but we'll see where it goes in May."

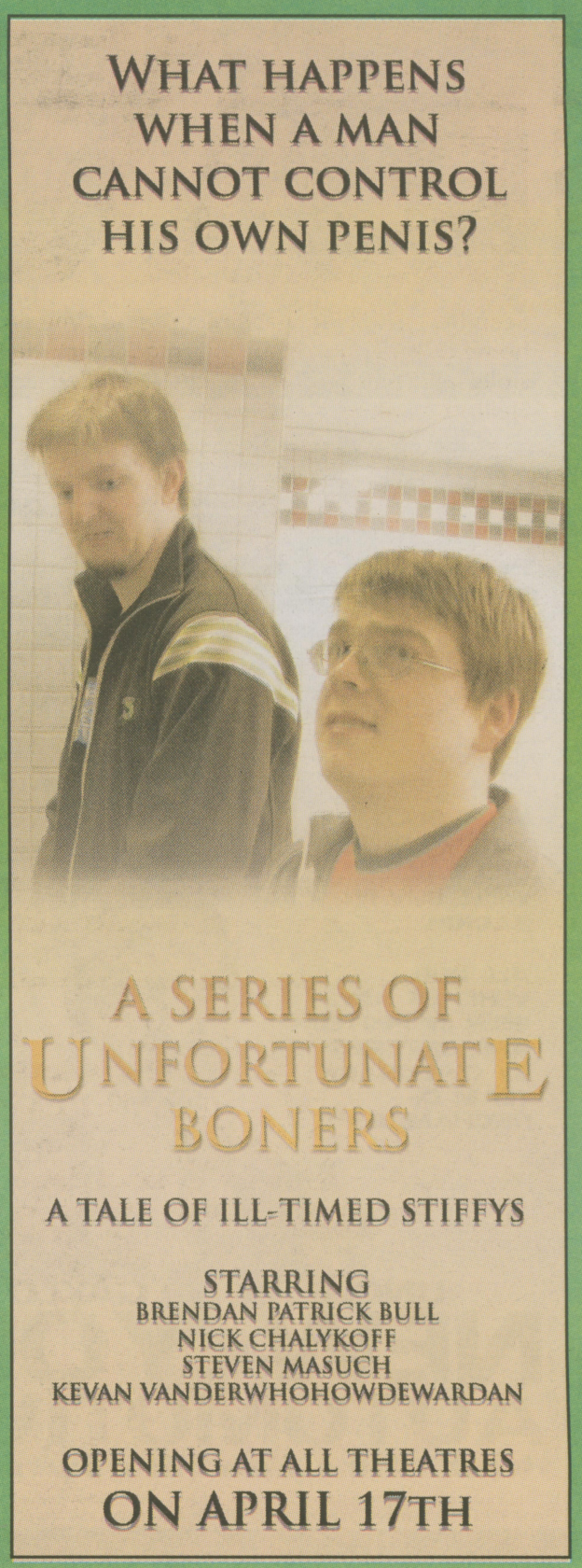


Andy Hill and his new friend Matt Davidson.

Hill and Warren aren't the only happy ending – two finalists, Bryce Dundon, an avid gamer and *Star Wars* fan met Jared Bernstein on the pub-crawling group venture. The duo felt an immediate spark at the first bar and pulled out of the running to be Hill's boyfriend.

Although the pair has been keeping a low profile, a source close to them insists that the new couple is happy. "Bryce hasn't stopped smiling since he met Jared; [I think] that he's the one!" revealed the mole.

To the applicants who weren't so lucky in love, Hill offers up a little advice: make a poster of your own. . . and take a date to karaoke. "If it doesn't turn out, at least you get to see them make an ass out of themselves trying to get you."



VICTORIA'S SECRET REVEALED!

LINGERICON STILL GOING STRONG

For years, Victoria has been famous for her luxurious bras and sexy, itty-bitty undies. The lingerie icon's catalogues are hotly anticipated by grown women eager to copy Victoria's trademark style and by teenage boys eager to spend time alone in the bathroom.

Although her career has been built almost entirely on selling underwear, there's no denying that the lady has class.

But Victoria does indeed have a secret. She was spotted at a Zeller's department store late Tuesday afternoon, browsing through the polyester panties and garish bras in the store's lingerie department.

"I thought it was strange," said store employee and eyewitness Billy-Jo Jarrett, "'cause she, like, makes her own undies, y'know? Why'd she need to shop for 'em here? So, I followed her."

Hidden behind a clothes rack, the gum-hungry teen saw Victoria stop, look around quickly, and then reach out and grab several items off the shelf before straightening up and strolling away, whistling nonchalantly in an effort to appear inconspicuous.

"So I called out and asked her, y'know, why she was shopping here, and she seemed really upset that I'd noticed her," said Jarrett. "She was just like, 'What's that over there?' And when I turned to look, she threw whatever she was holding at me and ran. So I picked it up and it was, like, huge flesh-tone granny panties!"

Granny panties, defined by Weebler's Dictionary of Weird and Wonderful Words as "underwear that doubles as a brassiere," are full-bottomed panties with a waistline that typically sits somewhere between the bottom of the ribcage and the armpit.

In emergency situations, the garments can be easily converted into a functional shelter by the simple addition of a centre pole and some tent pegs, with leg holes functioning as aesthetically pleasing skylights. "They were really ugly," said Jarrett. "I thought her secret would be something sexier."

"Now, an underwear icon shopping for store-brand bloomers is strange enough," said psychoanalyst Adler Frung-Jeud when asked to comment on Victoria's bizarre behaviour. He said that panties so tremendously huge clearly indicate very low self-esteem. "She was, in effect, trying to hide behind her skivvies."

Representatives for the embarrassed celebrity denied accusations of Victoria's psychological problems.

"There is nothing wrong with what she did," said PR head Jerry Richardson. "She just happens to get off on the feeling of giant cotton panties."

Seen here enjoying a rollicking good time on her home gym, aging ultra-super model Victoria flashes a smile–and that's not all–for the *O Really?!* cameras! Hello to you too, Vikki!

FEELING YOUR WAY

SEX ADVICE FROM OUR RESIDENT VIRGIN

My friends who have actually had sex have told me that adventure can do wonders to bring excitement to intercourse. If you and your partner are tired of conventional sex and are interested in spicing things up in the bedroom, you may want to try something provocative—the missionary position!

Now I know some of you may consider this act to be kinkier than you're comfortable with, and some will wonder how this position is even technically possible, but from what my grandmother has told me, it's easier than you'd think.

Here's some play-by-play advice that, with some mutual partner trust, will help you master missionary.

- As with all acts involving vaginal penetration, remember to keep you and your partner both clean and dry (coloured toilet paper works well to sop up those sloppy female/male excretions).

- Remember, foreplay is never really necessary—closed-mouthed kissing should do the trick and prevents icky exchanges of messy bodily liquids.

- When the male's penis member has been covered with a condom or a plastic bread bag tied off with an elastic band, the female should recline on her back, open her legs to an angle of 160 degrees and try to resist entry by contracting her Filipino Tubes.

- Penile insertion should be fast and without warning—like pulling a bandage off a festering wound. Keep in mind, when it comes to sex there are no bad noises.

- As an aside, it's best to defecate before intercourse, since I've heard orgasm can cause temporary incontinence.

- Now the thrusting begins. Remove your penis entirely from the vagina and re-insert. Perform three to five repetitions.

- At the moment of climax, the man should retire to the restroom and carefully ejaculate into the toilet while the woman gets dressed and leaves.

Now you have had sex in the missionary position! Congratulations.

Next week: the racy world of open-mouth kissing and dirty conversation—also called oral sex.

"Feeling Your Way" author Danny Trout has been certified a virgin by the UN's Special Virginity Commitee on Total Lack of Sex. He also thinks "vulva" is a species of insect.

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HAVE FUN ON WARP TOUR

FAT 30-YEAR-OLD BOY NAMED CANADA'S POET LAUREATE

Multi-talented singer/songwriter and fry cook B.A. Johnston, a hero of the Canadian unclassifiable music scene, has been named Canada's new Poet Laureate.

After Pauline Michel abandoned the position in February, Canada's parliamentary librarian, Richard Paré, began an exhaustive three-hour Google search for a new Canadian bard.

"I stumbled on one of Johnston's original compositions, 'Have Fun on Warp Tour,' which I felt captured the restless energy of Canada's alternative youth culture," said Paré.

In the song, from Johnston's landmark record *My Heart is a Blinking Nintendo*, he laments youthful vanity and deftly peels away the aggressive, rebellious mask worn by much of Canada's youth.

"Have fun on Warp Tour, baby / Will he take off his wristbands when he holds you in his mom's car?" writes Johnston. "I've been replaced by a 23-year-old emo fuckball."

The song speaks of loneliness and feelings of inadequacy. At a time when young men lift weights and sport tattoos to appear strong and capable, Johnston fights for the right to slack—the right to live in your mom's basement until you're 30, reading *Simpsons* comic books and playing *Mega Man 2*.

For much of the past decade, the Hamilton, Ont. native has toured across Canada, performing offbeat entertainments and sorrowful dirges to drunken, impolite crowds of bearded scenesters and poor white trash.

The allure of touring has long since worn off—as Johnston writes, "I'd rather be riding mopeds in Taiwan than play another shitty sports bar in Saskatchewan."

Paré points to Johnston's poignant and unexpected similes, his ability to find a common beauty in love and high-cholesterol foods.

"You're pretty sweet like a sour key, I'm pretty sweet like a sour key," he writes. "And kissing you was a dream, it was a dream come true / Better than king prawn vindaloo."

Johnston's fixation on food has led to some of his most inspired work, including "Vindaloo," "Western Sandwich," "I Love You, Pizzaman," and "Grease Lullaby."

"Got a deep fryer in my bedroom," he writes. "French fries are dancing in my dreams / Deep-fried shrimp is my reality."

A self-proclaimed "fat, lazy chud," Johnston was surprised when he received an e-mail from Paré asking him to take the position as Poet Laureate.

In a statement to the Canadian Press, Johnston said, "It's pretty cool, I guess. It's, like, 22 grand a year, so I can put a clean mattress in the back of my van and maybe buy some new meshback hats."

Johnston went on to say that he plans to put much of his laureate salary towards researching a new poetry collection inspired by Canada's "greasiest diners, stankiest peeler bars, and the sweetest Nintendo games of all time."

The laureate position has no job requirements, and the poet need not write or publish any work, which suits Johnston just fine.

"I'll probably write lots of stuff, but I just want people to come out to the shows and watch me tear up a $38 Casio keyboard like nobody's business. It's all about music . . . and sandwiches. And I want lots of people to see me with no shirt on."

B.A. Johnston, Canada's new Poet Laureate, stands proudly outside X-citement Video, one of his regular hang-outs.

SUPER-NEAT

BUSH'S SECRET WEAPON WEARS TIGHT TIGHTS

With violence escalating in the Middle East and support for his administration decreasing at home, President George W. Bush announced a new strategy for the War on Terror.

"What's faster than a tall building?" Bush asked reporters. "Able to leap speeding locomotives with a single bound? No, not Neo. No, not a rocket-propelled King Kong—come on people, think." After a five-minute pause, faced with blank stares, Bush replied, "Superman—you know, the Man of Steel."

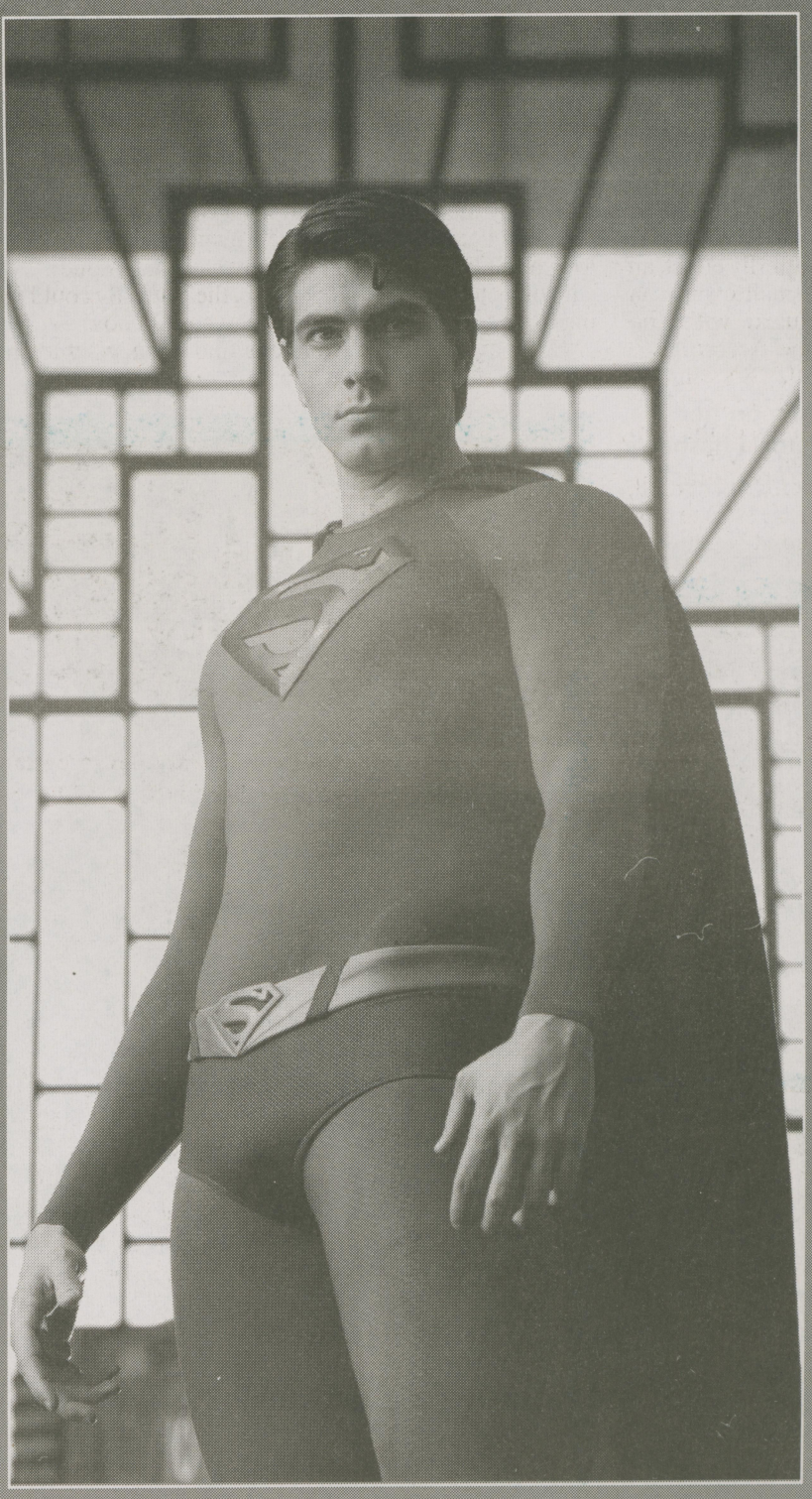
Rumours of Superman's demise in 1993 at the hands of Doomsday are unfounded, said Bush. Though Superman last made headlines 20 years ago with the defeat of Nuclear Man, Bush said, "I can assure you he'll receive ample press coverage for his return this summer." The rise of worldwide insurgent action "clearly indicates the need for truth, justice and the American way. And only one man, Superman, has built a career on those ideals."

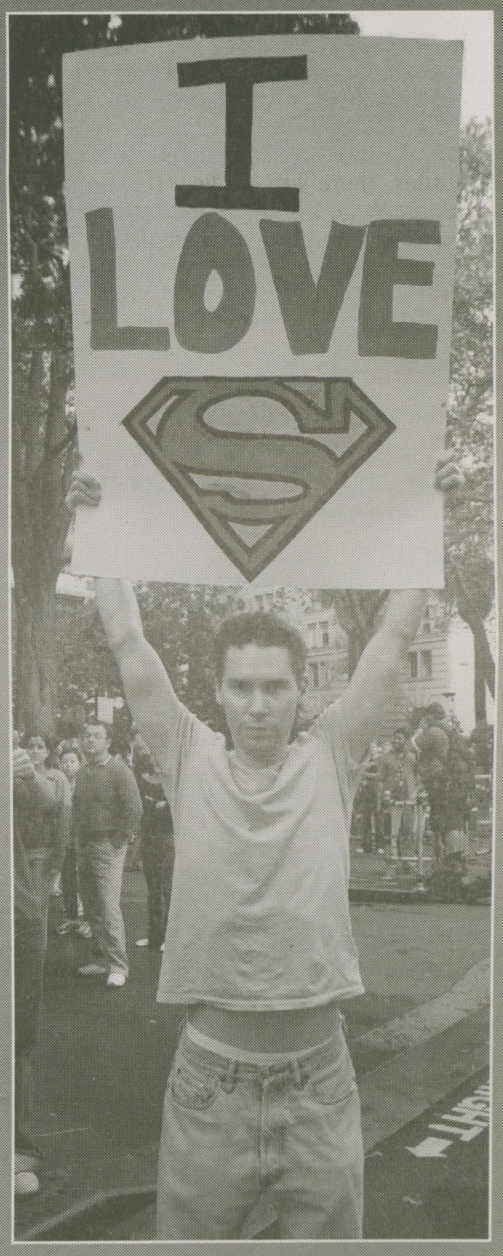
"During our recent phone conversation," Bush told reporters, "I told Superman how much his heroic deeds inspired me with pride as a youth. Every Sunday, I would read in the local paper how he'd defeated yet another threat to our nation. And that's the kind of consistency America needs in its mission overseas."

Bush commended Warner Bros. Entertainment for their instrumental role in bringing Superman out of retirement. Warner executives thanked the President for the military-sponsored expense budget, but offered no further comment regarding the forthcoming *Superman Returns* starring Brandon Routh.

About Superman arch-nemesis Lex Luthor, Bush had this to say: "It is my firm belief that Luthor is a key figure in the Axis of Evil. Any new dastardly scheme he may mastermind, I am confident Superman will foil."

Bush ended the press conference with a warning to Al-Qaeda. "Osama bin Laden, your days of hiding are numbered. Justice may be blind, but Superman has X-ray vision. And you can't hide from that." Bush then paused a moment. "Well, unless you live in a hideout made of lead."





Right: Codenamed "Kal-El" Bush's new Superman intiative is positioned to stop insurgent bullets this summer.

Above: A fan of Bush's new plan.

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This courtroom sketch shows defense lawyer Johnson, Johnson with the accused alighted on his shoulder.

A LITTLE FLUTTER

BUTTERFLY FLAPS ITS WINGS, GETS PUT ON TRIAL FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

The trial of the century began today in The Hague, the Netherlands, as the case against the butterfly accused of causing the hurricanes that devastated the southern United States was presented. The most notable of these storms, Hurricane Katrina, destroyed the city of New Orleans.

The butterfly is being tried for crimes against humanity, defined in international criminal law as murderous persecution against a body of people. "People died. That's murder. If there's murder, there are bodies. It's simple," said U.S. President George W. Bush, who is also pushing to have hurricanes classified as weapons of mass destruction.

Prosecution argument relies heavily on the butterfly effect, an illustration of chaos theory's concept that a small event can have huge ramifications—not to be confused with the mediocre Ashton Kutcher film of the same name. According to the butterfly effect theory, the flapping of a butterfly's wings in China can cause a hurricane on the other side of the world.

"It's a classic example," said prosecutor & Smith, of the firm Smith, Smith, Johnson & Smith, as President Bush was led indoors, singing, "Cars go vroom, Bombs go boom," to himself, while waving a little model missile in front of his face. "The butterfly destroyed thousands of lives and it shouldn't be allowed to escape with no consequences."

Representatives for the butterfly were vocal in their derision of the charges. "It's ridiculous," said defence lawyer Johnson, Johnson of the firm Johnson, Johnson, Smith & Johnson. "My client is a butterfly. A small insect. Let's be serious now, folks."

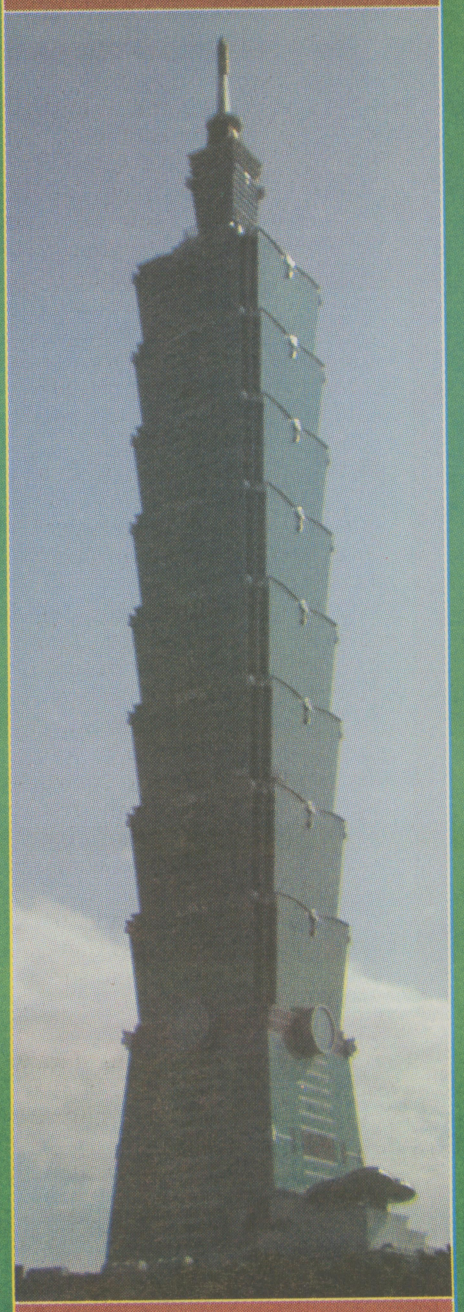
The butterfly, its four front limbs manacled in specially designed, tiny steel handcuffs, rode quietly on its counsel's shoulder, slowly waving its antennae. It gave no reply to media questions.

There is talk of a pending civil suit to recover the damages caused by the hurricanes, but legal counsel has raised the concern that not only is the butterfly nearing the end of its months-long adult life—it doesn't actually have any money.

If convicted in the criminal case, the butterfly could face having its wings pulled off by a seven-year-old boy.

"Families is where our nations find hope, where wings take dream," said Bush for no apparent reason.

REALLY TALL BUILDINGS



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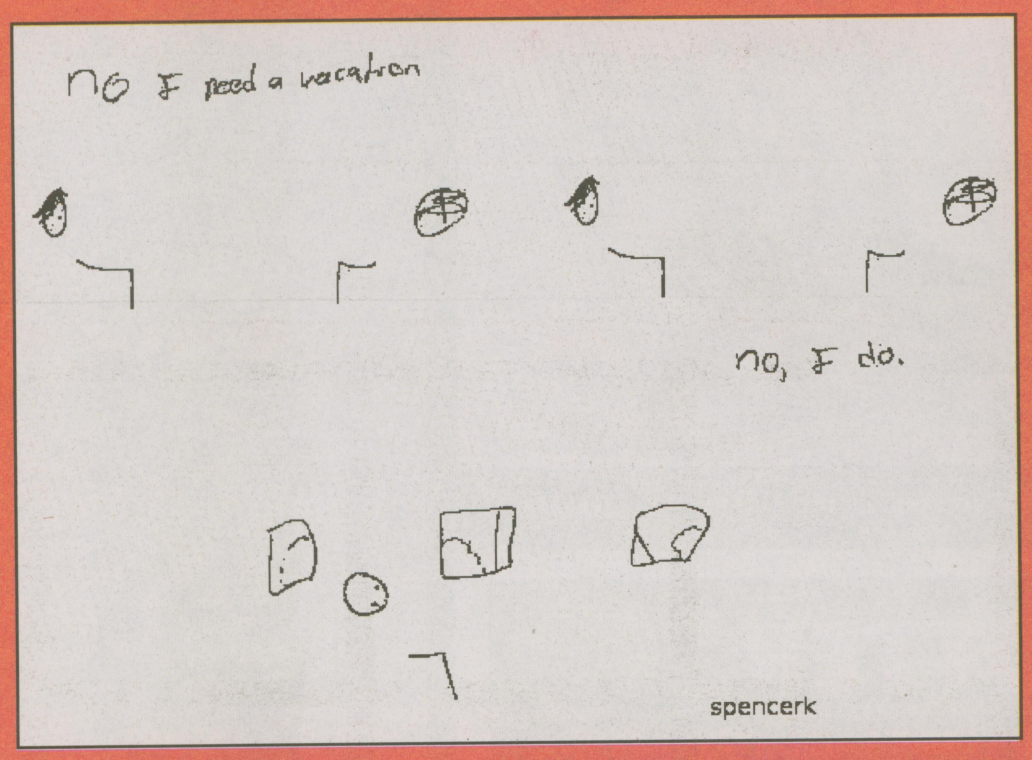

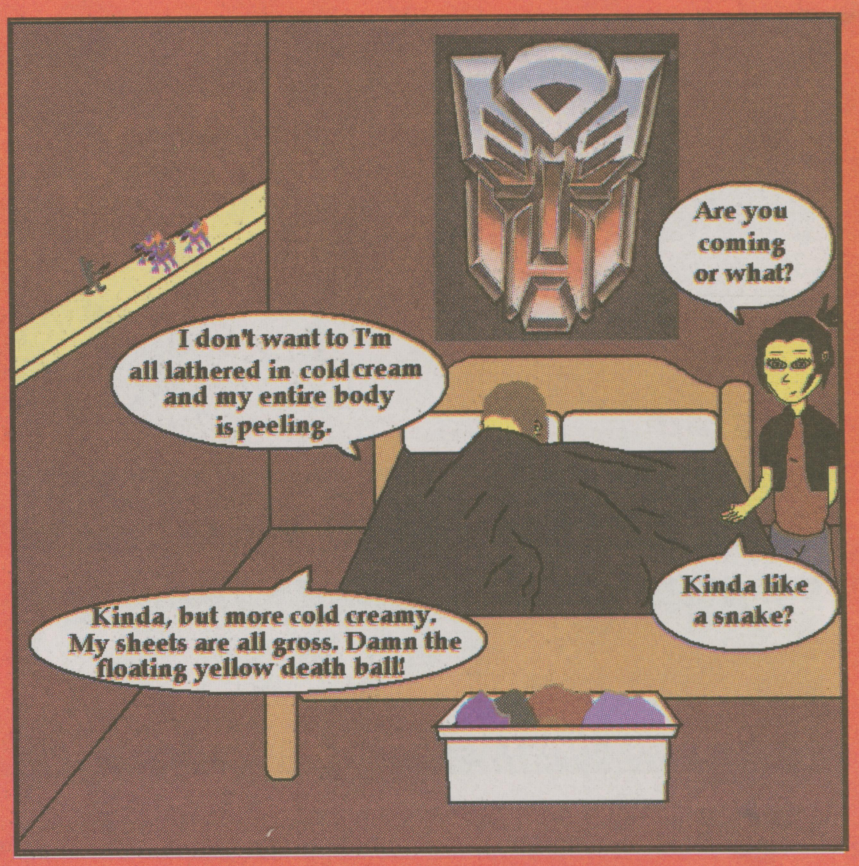

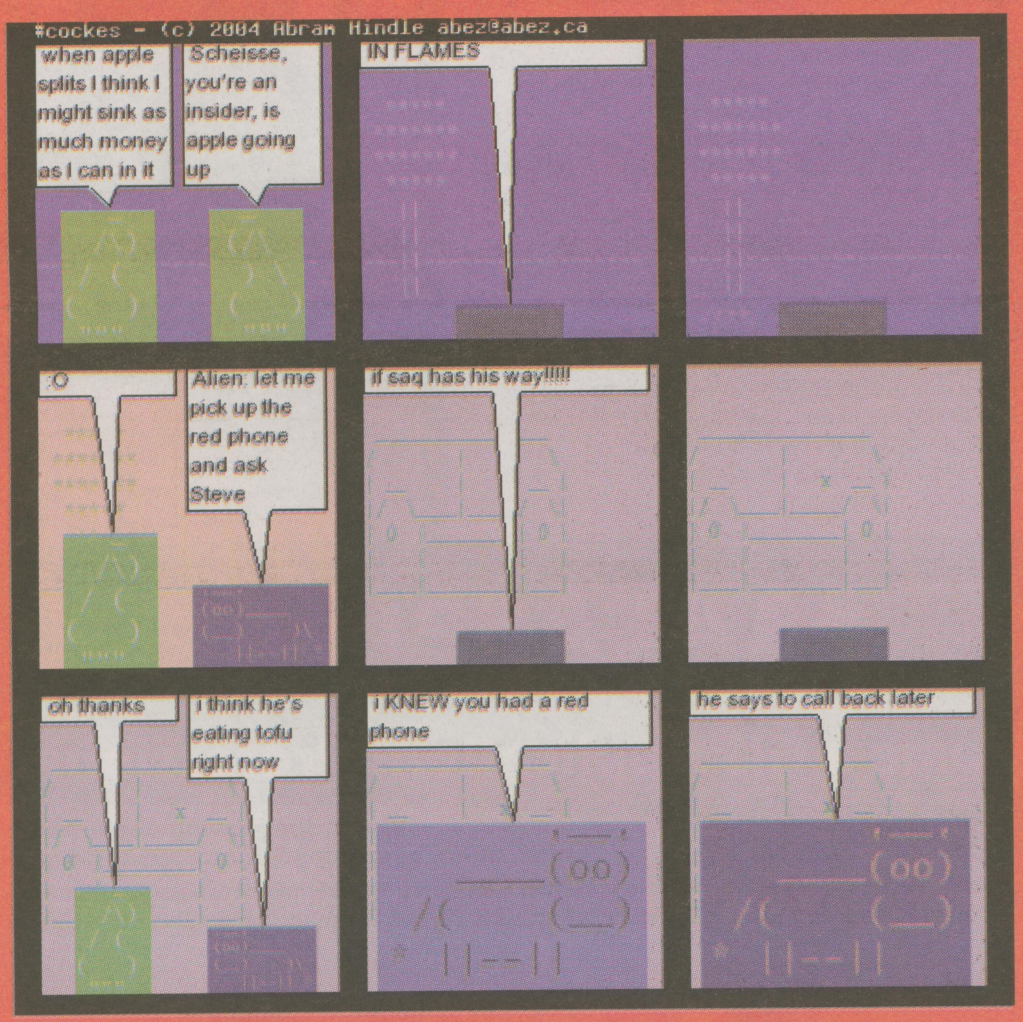

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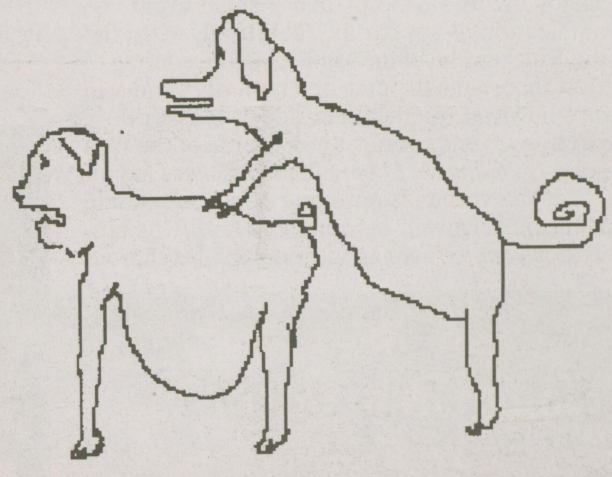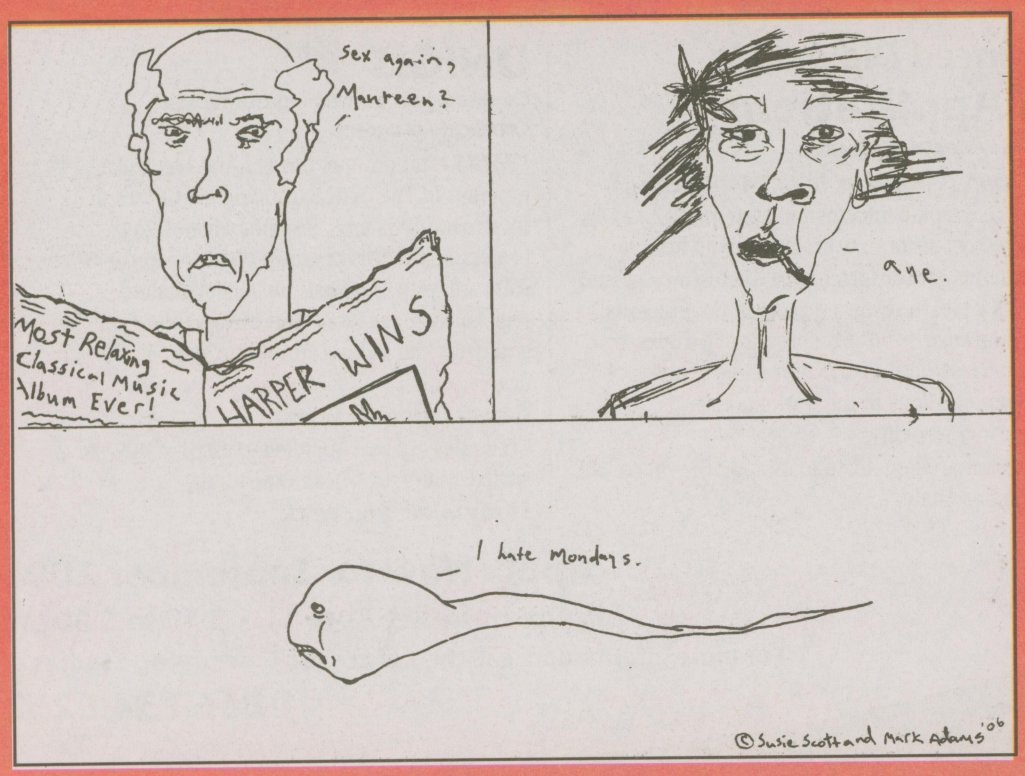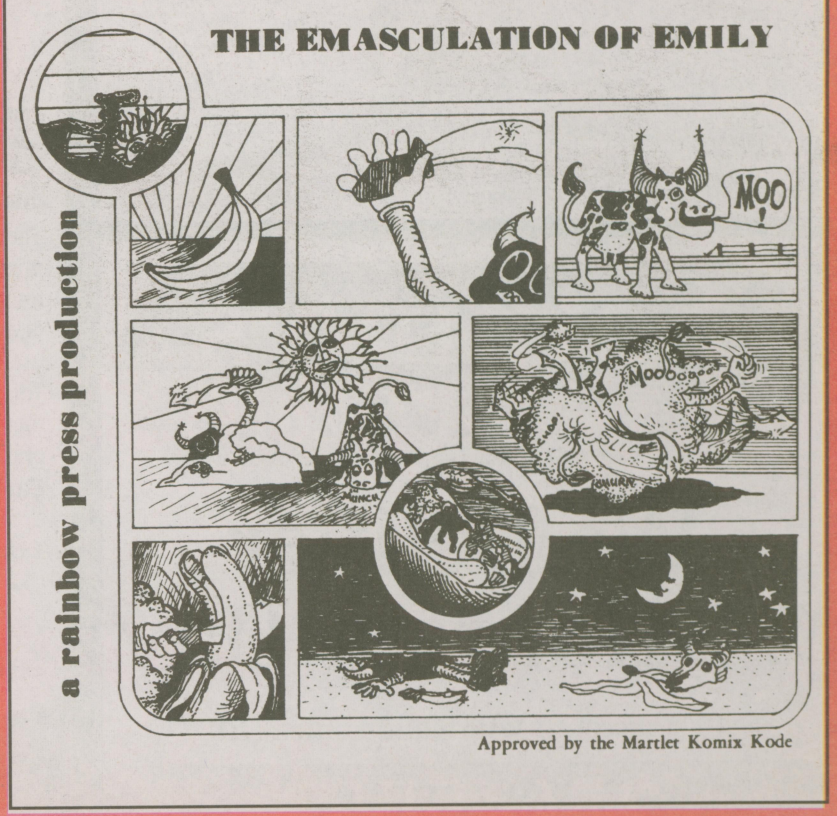
Goat says: "Don't Worry Pig. I'm just trying to get a better view . . . of you squealing."